

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

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## AMERICAN TASKS

(Speech in debate with Farrell Dobbs before New York membership,  
April 19, 1953)

By Bert Cochran

We are embarked on a great debate in our party -- and I think it will prove very beneficial to the organization, will clear up many misconceptions, will right many things in the course of its unfoldment, will straighten out relationships, and will sweep a lot of cobwebs that have accumulated over the years out of a lot of corners and recesses. This debate is not only a vital one, maybe a historic one, but a difficult one, because the differences are still being formulated as far as our opponents are concerned, and have not yet matured to fully demarcated programmatic antagonisms. It is therefore doubly incumbent on the membership to hear out the arguments and positions without prejudice, and to be scrupulous and fair in appraising the positions.

You heard the beginning of the debate on Stalinism and the Third World Congress positions. You have had an opportunity to read our document. You know something about the official position of our party when the debate started three years ago on Eastern Europe. The facts are incontestable that the majority of our leaders in New York were unnerved by the cataclysmic events that were taking place all over the world, were overwhelmed by them, did not understand them, and their sole contribution was to malign the people whose understanding was greater than theirs, to organize a witch hunt around the party against non-existent dangers, and to inoculate people against the wrong diseases.

Finally, as their own positions got blown out from beneath them, they precipitately abandoned them without explanation or analysis; and formally, and as we see now -- only formally, adopted the World Congress positions. No sooner was the vote recorded, however, than they tried to turn their backs on all this, to learn nothing from the experience, and to construct for themselves a new world here in the United States out of the whole cloth. Here, in their imagination we had the finished leadership, the full-blown revolutionary party, and we would move triumphantly forward toward the American revolution, looking neither to the left nor right, without having to trouble about Stalinism, without Social Democratic or Centrist blockades, without other bedeviling and harassing problems which were besetting our parties abroad.

This new perspective has been germinating and unfolding, in reality, only in the recent past, despite all the tall talk and misdirected history about our granite line and 25-year tradition. And, as some of us watched with dismay, especially in the last year, this wretched, jerry-built structure taking shape (with the architects in New York and Los Angeles each contributing their own rickety wings) we could see that the Stalinophobe-Third Campist Escapist-Sectarian traits, displayed so pronouncedly and unmistakably in the debates over Eastern Europe and the World Congress resolutions had come back to haunt and plague the party on the American question as well.

## A Vulgar Anti-Stalinist Tendency

Our Document demonstrates irrefutably from the record -- not from the gossip of the corridors -- that over a number of years, comrades in the leadership have been manifesting a vulgar anti-Stalinist tendency, revealed for all to see in the debate over Reuther in 1947; revealed in the debate over Eastern Europe in 1950; revealed again in the debate over the World Congress resolutions a year later, revealed over our attitude toward the Stalinists in the recent months.

Now, Stalinophobia led the Shachtmanites to conciliate with imperialist public opinion. Occasionally, some of our own leading comrades took a half a step in this direction as in the case of Reuther and again over the Korean war. But our tradition and training against this type of conciliationism is so powerful, our stand on the Soviet Union so firmly implanted in the thinking of the membership, that the road is still effectively barred toward this path of development. Instead, we saw people infected with this same type of Stalinophobia attempt to find succor and refuge in a revolutionary ivory tower by a tendency to petrification in the sphere of Marxist thought. They were turning their backs on the real world, its struggles and line-ups, in favor of Third Campist declamations, lofty pronouncements, and an almost mystical faith in the elemental process.

I will begin first with the September 1951 plenum of our National Committee. The meeting took place when all the documents of the World Congress were in, when the major positions were all established, and when our new world outlook had presumably been perfected. It was the duty of the leadership -- especially of people so much concerned -- and rightly concerned -- as Comrade Thomas advised us they were as to the American application of the new world positions, in what we do here -- it was the duty of a leadership, I say, to draw up an analysis of what the objective reality was in the United States, what problems the party faced, and on what tasks we would concentrate our efforts. Instead the pronouncement of that Plenum on America was -- zero. Just plain zero. It said nothing. It analyzed nothing. The party membership was waiting for an answer, for a lead. It didn't get it. Some perfunctory memorandum was submitted, and it was such a canned, worthless product that it was withdrawn by common consent all around. The only proposal of that Plenum was to have a Presidential Campaign in 1952, and even that was not motivated and fitted into an over-all perspective.

In his article, I notice Comrade Dobbs criticizes "a tendency toward local autonomy that has developed in main lines of branch orientation." His prescription for the trouble is laughable. If you want to know the reason for this developing so-called autonomy, it is because the branches got no proper lead from the National Committee and had to depend on their own intellectual resources to answer the problems of political life. To hold a group together in times of reaction and repression, you need an ideology, a clear and correct perspective, a political tactic. If you don't provide that, centrifugal tendencies and even worse will set in; and all your Coordinating Commissions, and mimeographed exhortations will not halt the process. I know what I'm talking about on this matter. The party in 1951 was thirsting for a political perspective and integrated line, not for some new administrative gimmicks. Only on the basis of a correct line does administrative coordination have sense and worth. Without

it, it is the most barren of barren pursuits.

### Third Campist Manifestations

My next exhibit in outlining the evolution of this sectarian tendency is the letter of Farrell Dobbs to the Political Committee on November 29, 1951. Here was the perspective he sketched out for the movement:

"We confine ourselves too exclusively to agitation for a Labor Party. We go off balance by failing to give sufficient explanation to the membership that, although one can argue the probability of a Labor Party development, it is not an indispensable step to the formation of a mass revolutionary party. . . . Class antagonisms are bound to grow sharper and sharper. The longer the union bureaucrats block the formation of a Labor Party, the greater the political vacuum will become, and the more opportunity we will have to recruit workers directly into our party. . . . If the rise of a Labor Party should be long delayed, it is not excluded that the American workers might leap over, very quickly if not entirely, that intermediate stage of their radicalization."

What is wrong with this? Only that it misunderstands the most important fact of the American labor reality; the fact that the American working class is strongly, superbly organized today, that it is dominated by an entrenched and politically conscious labor bureaucracy, and that when this working class becomes radicalized, it will move in its first stages, and probably for a whole period thereafter, as a mass, through its organizations, and not jump over the head of its organizations. Whoever does not understand this does not understand the American labor movement. Our considerable discussions and writings in 1947 and 1948 on the emergence of a new socially-conscious bureaucracy and its meaning was all in vain so far as Comrade Dobbs was concerned. His position that I have just quoted -- taken by itself -- if seriously developed and pursued, would condemn a group to the role of a Socialist sect, cut off from the main stream of the movement.

His talk of a vacuum existing is similarly inept. A political vacuum means the absence of a leadership. There was such a vacuum in America in the NRA period, because masses were plunging headlong to organizing the basic industries, and the old AFL leadership was trying to hold them back; and as Lewis explained at that time to the AFL mossbacks, if they didn't move in and offer the leadership, somebody else would come along to supply it. A vacuum can appear, theoretically anyhow, if a mass movement develops for a labor party and the official union leadership resolves to block it. But how was a vacuum appearing in 1951 with reaction deepening, with living standards maintained, and the unions on the defensive and in the grip of the witch hunt? Definitely, nothing of this is comprehensible!

Well, Dobbs and his co-worker Swabek had a thesis accounting for all these developments, which they submitted to the Political Committee a little earlier. I can give it to you in a nutshell: War preparations and mounting inflation would slash the workers' living standards and lead to the eruption of great class battles; and thus, to a change, in the whole objective situation.

As a matter of fact, Swabeck sent in a memorandum to the Political Committee as far back as January 1951, where he saw even then all hell busting loose.

Here is his prognosis: "It would seem to be a foregone conclusion that the projected bourgeois onslaught at home -- already beginning -- and the resistance ensuing must drive a wedge of the realities of the class struggle deeply into the most vulnerable point of this great deterrent. As the working class presses forward in its resistance against the onslaught on its standard of living and the democratic rights, the labor bureaucracy faces the alternative of which road, toward breaking its reliance upon and support to the bourgeois state, or toward rupturing relations with its own rank and file membership?

"I think these considerations will lead to the conclusion that we are now definitively reaching a turning point in American imperialist developments which will be reflected, above all, in sharpened class relations at home carrying the impact of deep repercussions within the trade union movement. We are reaching the point at which the quantitative changes of this movement will begin to take on new qualitative characteristics."

Now, this is an analysis, it's a perspective, even if unreal and fanciful. You know what they're talking about, anyhow: Workers' living standards are being slashed; Great class battles loom on the horizon; A vacuum of leadership will arise; We can move ahead as a revolutionary party whether a labor party is or is not formed, and probably preferably without one.

At the Political Committee meeting of December 11, 1951 Comrade Cannon snapped up Dobbs' letter. He made a motion to adopt its general line and that he be empowered to write a series of articles in the paper based upon it. Luckily, we got a reprieve from this plunge into the void, when Clarke objected saying that what was needed was a political resolution giving our rounded views on American developments, strategy and tactics.

### The First Draft

I now proceed to March 1952 when the Secretariat Sub-Committee brought in the first draft of the Political Resolution. And what did we discover? The Dobbs-Swabeck letters were no individual aberration. The theme was written into the resolution draft: "the raging inflation," "the slashing of living standards." About the labor party, as a perspective, or even as a slogan -- not a word, not a mumbling word! The resolution contented itself with the thundering proclamation that "We intend to challenge and engage in direct combat all rivals," and "that we intend to proceed from the maximum, not the minimum possibilities." I don't say this first draft contains a clear-cut policy to jump over the head of the existing labor movement and march in a straight line to the Socialist emancipation. I say it simply lends itself to that kind of a sectarian concept -- and it is in that spirit that its authors and supporters apparently understood it, and understand it.

Well, Clarke and Frankel drew up a whole series of amendments, and rewrote the resolution pretty much from top to bottom. And it is the second, rewritten draft that was adopted by the Political Commit-

tee, the National Committee, and the convention. That draft -- and only that one -- is the position of the party.

The Raging Inflation -- Crisis Around the Corner -- Early Big Upsurge Theory was tossed out the window. It was replaced -- not by a blueprint, a sure-fire prediction of just what would take place on what day or month -- but by a realistic Marxist appraisal of what lies ahead and how to orient oneself with some degree of coherence and reality in an uncertain and fast-moving world. Here are a few key sentences:

"The equilibrium of American capitalism at the present time, based as it is upon a breakneck race between crisis and war economy, is an equilibrium of dynamic components. The unprecedented growth of production in a narrowing world and domestic market is counter-balanced by the unprecedented growth of the peacetime war budget. It is clear that the slightest relaxation of the war drive conjures up the immediate spectre of depression and collapse in the sole remaining bastion of world capitalism. This depression, the capitalist class well knows, would be all the more explosive for having been artificially repressed over a period of years by means which only aggravate the crisis tendencies. It is quite obvious therefore that the capitalist class will move heaven and earth to plunge the nation into war before the explosion of the American economy.

"It must be kept in mind, however, that the present equilibrium of U.S. economy, loaded with explosives though its basis may be, in an equilibrium nevertheless. It provides full employment for the American workers on an unprecedented scale, and has continued to provide a large outpouring of consumers' goods for the people, even though this flow is beginning to diminish. . . Since the workers will be impelled on the road to struggle only by important changes in their material status, it is clear that the American social crisis waits upon the destruction of the present explosive equilibrium by either war or crisis."

Next, a section was written in on the labor party question, straightening out the previous lopsided perspective.

Thus, on these two crucial matters of analysis and perspective, we, it would appear, carried the day, and that is the party policy. Now, make a mental note of this FACT NO. 1.

### Our Approach Toward the Stalinists

My next set of exhibits begins with the Political Committee meeting of January 8, 1952. For months, you know, there had been debates, frictions and wrangling over our attitude toward the Stalinist-front, or Stalinist-influenced organizations. As climax to this discussion, Bartell submitted a memorandum at this meeting on the question. (I wasn't in New York at the time, so I don't know whether he smuggled the memorandum into the meeting; or just brazenly walked right into the meeting with it. But through one means or another, he got it into the meeting, past the electric eye.)

Bartell said that we ought to pay special attention to the ALP in New York and the Progressive Party; that we ought to send in a group of comrades in there to take advantage of the split developing be-

tween Marcantonio and the Stalinists; that we have to correct our false characterization of the Progressive Party, which up to that time we designated as a Third Capitalist Party; that under certain circumstances, we should give critical support to ALP and PP candidates, when they run independently.

Well, that's all our PC majority needed to hear! You can just picture to yourself the righteous indignation. Cannon went after Bartell bell, book and candle. Let me give you a few of the pearls. Is the Progressive Party a third capitalist party? Yes Sir! And how! "There is a strong trend," says Cannon, "which is apparently a decisive one by now, to sacrifice its policy of running independent candidates and to adopt the so-called 'coalition' tactic, that is the support of candidates of one or the other progressive bourgeois parties and to act as a faction of one or the other party in primary campaigns. I don't believe these changes imply our previous designation was wrong. They rather tend to confirm it." Is Marcantonio in conflict with the Stalinists over the question of running independent candidates? He couldn't fool our PC. "The real motivation of Marcantonio," said Cannon, "is to get rid of the 'stigma' of the unpopularity of the Soviet Union before the war" and that Marcantonio was heading back to the imperialist camp.

What did Cannon and the others offer as against Bartell's proposals? What positive line did they propose as to how to deal with the Stalinist followers, the rank and file, not a few of whom, most of whom are workers? Nothing! They voted Bartell down, and that disposed of the issue.

The party line, apparently, was to have no approach to the Stalinist ranks. But two months later, the following amendments were "smuggled in" by us into the resolution, unnoticed by our astute critics, were adopted by the National Committee Plenum, and subsequently by the Party Convention -- and so, I presume, they constitute Party policy. What are these amendments? Every essential position taken by Bartell, which was haggled over for months and voted down is incorporated into the resolution. What does the resolution say about the Progressive Party? A third capitalist party? Not this time!

"Shorn of its bourgeois allies, who put the stamp of a popular front coalition on the party in its heyday, the PP survives today as an alliance between independent radicals, petty-bourgeois politicians and intellectuals on the one side and the Stalinists on the other who play the dominant role providing most of the cadres and active manpower. This change in the character of the party has removed it from the arena of direct competition with the big capitalist parties and placed it in the camp of radical left-wing politics."

Is it important to have an approach toward the Progressive Party. The Resolution says it is. "Our attitude toward the Progressive Party must be determined by the following considerations: That it is the sole electoral organization of importance in the anti-imperialist camp besides ourselves; that it still groups around itself a considerable number of radical workers and students; that the coalition policy of the leadership is in contradiction with the desires and aspirations of a part of its membership and following. In fighting the PP for the support of the radical workers our propaganda tactics must be devised toward exposing the fundamental fallacy of its basic pro-

gram while demonstrating by example how a realistic anti-war struggle is conducted. On the other hand, a carefully formulated program of fraction work where warranted by the situation and not in conflict with the needs of our election campaign, united front proposals on specific issues relating to democratic rights, the struggle against war and the Negro question, can help raise the Socialist political level of the rank and file. . . We must not allow Stalinist domination over these radical-minded workers and students to go unchallenged." -- Followed by ten paragraphs on the importance of an approach to the Stalinist ranks.

The record is unmistakable that in March you retreated on this series of questions; on the over-all perspective, on the labor party, on our approach toward the Stalinist-influenced movements. You did not insist on your previous unrealistic positions, and went along with our amendments.

### An Unprincipled Operation

On these questions then, at any rate, one would imagine we ought to have agreement. These matters should be removed as points of difference in the present debate. Instead, the minute the discussion reopens, we are attacked as Mensheviks and liquidators -- and offered as proof are all the exploded arguments and positions of yours of a year ago, which were specifically discarded by the Resolution. We are confronted with the identical Lovestoneistic operation that we witnessed on the International questions, of adopting promiscuously, and with indifference, the positions of your opponents only to immediately thereafter launch a ferocious onslaught against the very same people whose positions you have accepted.

This unprincipled operation can be demonstrated from the record. Dobbs voted for the Resolution. He claims to be a proponent of it. Yet listen to his present document: "Some within the movement, who draw pessimistic conclusions from the present ascendancy of reaction and the ebb in the class struggle here, seem ready to concede in advance that U.S. imperialism can go a long way with its program. . . They seem to foresee imperialism carrying through its war program for a prolonged period with a favorable relation of class forces for it here at home." What do you mean, "Some within the movement?" Leaving aside your invention about the "prolonged period" that's what the resolution says, and I read it to you! Dobbs states further: "They seem to hold a dark view of the prospects of any serious class struggle manifestations before the workers have experienced extremely harsh blows." Again, you're paraphrasing the resolution! And what are you trying to prove anyhow? Do you think there are going to be major class battles before a thorough-going shake-up occurs? This is phrase-mongering, childish prattle, without a pretense of analysis, without a glimmer of thought or maturity. As you wade through this mass of verbiage, what emerges is that, first, Dobbs is slipping back to his perspectives and analysis of 1951. And secondly, that he is polemicizing against positions of the resolution under cover of attacking us.

### The Labor Party Question

Let me proceed next to the position on the Labor Party which Dobbs thought we were over-emphasizing terribly much in 1951, and



which his co-thinkers didn't even bother to mention in their draft of the party resolution, so determined were they not to have anything detract from the independence of the party. Here he can say, like the great Dante: "Though somewhat tardy, I perchance arrive." But he's not only arrived. He's arrived in a cloud of dust. He not only has comprehended the labor party perspective, but he is seeing big labor party movements under every bedstead. He refers to us scornfully because he claims we see "no evidence to indicate a serious trend in the direction of a labor party at present." I take this to mean that he does see "evidence to indicate a serious trend in the direction of a labor party at present."

Well, this must have taken place very recently. The Party Resolution adopted in July 1952 states: "Labor party sentiment is now at low ebb." Has anything of special importance occurred in this field since that time? I don't know of it. I know the UAW convention five years ago had a considerable debate on the labor party. I know the recent one had nothing of the kind.

Dobbs in all seriousness offers as evidence "to indicate a serious trend in the direction of a labor party at present" the fact that a labor party resolution was discussed at a meeting of the Chevrolet local in Flint, and that the local chairman favored it.

I must confess on this point you surprised me. Don't you know they've been discussing the labor party for years in Flint? Several years ago, the Chevrolet local was on record officially for the labor party. They set up a committee to work for the establishment of a labor party. They issued a pamphlet under the auspices of the union advocating a labor party, and circulated the pamphlet throughout the country. What we are witnessing at the present juncture is the ebb of a stronger movement of the recent past.

And please don't muddle everything by telling us about objective necessity. A trend means that the objective necessity has found subjective expression. Before it does, you don't have a trend. You have objective necessity, and subjective inadequacy and lag.

There have been only two periods in Dobbs' and my time in the labor movement when there was a serious trend for a labor party that I am acquainted with. The first was in 1936-37 when a virgin movement at the floodtide of its militancy instinctively sought to hurl itself beyond the confines of capitalist politics. You didn't have to drill a hole in somebody's head in order to discover the trend. It was there, palpable and observable. In New York State, Hillman, Dubinsky and the Stalinists were forced to organize an ostensibly independent labor party, the ALP, as the only method by which they could snare a whole sector of radicalized workers to vote for Roosevelt. Nationally, Lewis had to organize Labor's Non-Partisan League, in order to channel and control the many leftward currents, and deliver -- in distinct advance over Gompers policy -- labor's vote in an organized and cohesive fashion.

The second time a trend was developing for a labor party was in late 1943 and early 1944, when at the height of the agitation against the no-strike pledge a segment of the Michigan labor movement led by Emil Mazey and other left-Reutherites began a serious fight for the labor party. This was climaxed with the formation of the Michigan

Commonwealth Federation, which for a short period had the support of a small section of the Michigan unions, and was, behind the scenes, supported for a while even by Walter Reuther.

The 1945-46 strike wave refurbished the authority of the CIO officialdom. The continued prosperity made the conservative mood dominant. The witchhunt and reaction hurled the labor movement onto the defensive. That's the spot on the map at which we are standing at this moment. After all, we must exhibit some capacity to assess and evaluate the various whisps and incidents, some capacity to see a movement in its dynamic flow and ebb, and to understand whether it is advancing or receding. Else, all analysis becomes impossible, and politics is reduced to an uncorrelated and unintegrated mass of undigested details, incidents and fugitive impressions, with the loudest bawlers and the biggest boasters enthroned as the best Marxists.

### A New Edition of Musteism

I have tried to demonstrate, and I believe I have demonstrated from the documents that Dobbs is cavalier with the party positions on our analysis of the objective trend, and on the labor party developments. On the Stalinists -- they're back to where they were a year and a half ago, and pages 11, 12, 13, 14 and part of 15 of the Party Resolution might just as well not be in existence, so far as they are concerned.

Every attempt, every suggestion, no matter how modest, to find an approach to the Stalinist or Stalinist-influenced ranks is construed as showing a conciliatory attitude toward the Stalinists, going soft on Stalinism, abandoning the independence of the party, etc. You can ignore the history of their tendency on a whole series of major questions. You can take this by itself, and there is no question but that it constitutes proof of Stalinophobia, and adaptation to the present prejudices of the American working class. And to justify their highly unreasonable, highly unrealistic tactic, a new version of the theory of A. J. Muste is being constructed, and offered to us as the last word on the subject of building the party in the United States.

Muste, as you know, had the idea that we don't have to bother or occupy ourselves with the Stalinists or the Socialist Party, that the majority of the workers in America had no interest in either organization. The way to build the party, therefore, was to go straight to the factories, the mines, the mills, and talk Socialism, to the unaffiliated masses. This theory sounds very appealing, especially in this country. It has a little flaw, however. The very militants that you approach for your party are also approached by your rivals, and if they are larger and stronger, their attractive power is greater than yours. You cannot, in life, therefore, ignore a big rival, without reducing yourself to a sect of wishful thinkers, and often, smug braggarts.

But the Stalinists, you say, are weak in this country. That is true. That's why we don't need an orientation toward the Stalinist movement. But they are still far stronger, far more influential, above all, in the labor movement, than we are; and that is why we need an approach, a tactic toward their ranks, And we cannot turn our backs on them, under penalty of having this cadre, far bigger than

ours, block off out path to the politically unorganized workers in the mass movement when they become radicalized.

But I ran across somewhere that you're not really against opponents work if it is handled right. On page 16 of Dobbs's article I read: "We do not minimize the importance of opponents work against the Stalinists. We are fully in favor of opponents work in Stalinist organizations." They don't minimize the importance of opponents work! Then what did you start a war against Bartell for? Oh, I forgot, he was over-emphasizing this work, he went overboard by opening all the sluice-gates and flooding the ALP in New York with two people! How many people in your opinion should be sent in to properly keep this work in a subordinate position? They don't minimize! We have a memorandum from Dobbs' faction associates in Chicago on opponents work. Listen to it:

We have recently recruited a young member from the Progressive Party. He was impelled to the SWP by the Stalinist move to scuttle the PP. Since his joining the SWP the Stalinist proposal was over-ridden and he still retains his membership in a suburban branch now consisting of about ten members.

It is proposed that he remain a member of the PP and one other comrade be assigned to help him. The age range of the PP group runs from the middle thirties to over sixty. It contains some workers.

Our political aim, in whatever work in this milieu proves appropriate and feasible, is two-fold: 1) recruit to the SWP; 2) destroy the remnants of the PP as an independent organization.

We recognize the progressive aspects of the internal revolt against the Stalinists within the PP on the part of those who do not wish to dissolve into the Democratic party. This is outweighed however by the continued existence of an opponent organization. Therefore we have no interest in conducting ourselves in this party in such a way as would help its reconstitution and reorganization. Our tactic within the PP has nothing in common with fraction work within unions, NAACP, etc. This is opponents work as traditionally considered.

In making personnel assignments for opponents work in the PP we consider that the following activities take priority in the next period (not necessarily in order of importance):

1. The paper campaign
2. May Day banquet
3. Regularization of trade union fraction meetings
4. Assignments for fraction work in NAACP
5. Internal discussion

As you can see, they're just like Dobbs, they don't minimize the importance of this work, provided you give it its proper subordinate position -- item 6 of a 5-point agenda. It reminds you of the old doggeral, where the daughter is asking her mother:

"Mother, may I go out to swim?  
Yes, my darling daughter:

You may hang your clothes on a hickory limb,  
But don't go near the water!"

\* \* \*

In the light of this damning record, which I recited to you from the documents, Comrade Dobbs has the cool effrontery to write that the stew that he dishes up is "the course charted by the convention resolution." He must have the first rejected draft in mind. Oh, you may say, you have only read sections of the Resolution which bear out your case, but there are paragraphs that lend themselves to Dobbs' interpretations. I have read sections which demonstrate that on a number of questions, he is in clear opposition to the party position. But I don't deny that there is an element of ambiguity in the resolution. And that is the precise purpose of the present discussion: to help resolve all ambiguities, and seeming or real contradictions.

### The Trade Union Question

Let me now proceed to the trade union question. First, some factual information. Our present tactical course in the unions dates from the beginning of 1950. I presented, as the official PC reporter, a trade union report to the same Plenum where we discussed Eastern Europe. I analyzed the reasons for the shattering of the progressive oppositions in the three unions where we had the greatest influence -- auto, rubber, and the NMU. I presented the statistics of the workers relatively high living standards and the mood of conservatism deriving from it. I gave the reasons for the consolidation of the new Social-imperialistic labor bureaucracy. "All these considerations now dictate the necessity for us," my report stated, "to adjust our perspective to the present slower tempo of development and therefore to drastically modify our trade union tactic. The modification of our tactic must start with the resolve to get ourselves disentangled and free from the power caucuses in which we are participating, both the national ones and those of a local scale. We have just got to make that turn to save our cadre in the unions and be in a position to organize and shape the new struggles when the mood of the workers begins to shift and the radicalization process gains momentum. If we exhaust our resources and reserves now in indecisive engagements in which the mass of the workers are not yet involved, we will have no effectives left when the big opportunities arise at the next turn of events. . .

"We don't want our new trade union tactic to add up to doing nothing in the unions. We don't want to simply preserve ourselves and nothing else, or as the Old Man once remarked, we'll only become dried preserves. We don't want to spread the false notion that the alpha and omega of our trade union work is to avoid victimization, or that we can devise some sure-fire prescriptions that will guarantee our people against getting hurt in the witchhunt. No, our revolutionary trade unionists have to be trained in an opposite spirit. They have to take it for granted that there are no fool-proof methods of avoiding danger, that a revolutionist discounts ahead of time that fact that risks and losses are often inevitable and are the necessary accompaniment of the fight.

"We do not maintain that the proposed tactical adjustment will guarantee to save our cadre and deflect away from us the wrath and fear of the bureaucracy. All we can safely claim for the new tactic is that it will make it harder for the bureaucracy to pick us off and will provide us with the best safeguards against our people, or the bulk of them, getting needlessly thrown out of the unions. . . .

"What is the positive content of this tactic? We are going to become for the next period left wing political educators and propagandists instead of caucus politicians. We are going to raise on all appropriate occasions political questions from the shop steward system to the labor party to war. We will explain frankly the facts of life, as we see them, to our erstwhile caucus allies and try to convince them that the old-type caucuses are out of season now, that what is required are educational groups working to train the members on issues and prepare the ground for the next stage with its renewed spurt of insurgency and its more authentic left wing formations. We will concentrate more on educating a few workers in the shop and building the party there."

This report was adopted, if I recall correctly, unanimously by the Plenum, and I repeated the report to possibly a dozen branches in the course of my national tour.

I presented the same line, brought up to date, to the Political Committee before the May 1952 Plenum. It was adopted. I made the report to the Plenum of the National Committee in May 1952. The Plenum adopted it. I presented it, as the NC reporter, to the National Convention in July 1952. The convention adopted it. I am therefore not guilty of factional slanting when I state that that is the party policy for our trade union work.

Now, Comrade Dobbs is highly critical of the policy. That is his right. A man has the right to change his mind. But I ask you, in all faith, can anyone reading Dobbs' article, can anyone glean that what he is doing is polemicizing against the official party policy on the trade union question? Mind you, I say he has a right to polemicize against it. He has a right to try to overthrow it. But wouldn't it be in keeping with the fitness of things to make clear to the membership what he is about, and the true status of the opposing positions, before he presumes to lecture us about smuggling and sneak attacks? I hope he gets around to explaining this in his rebuttal.

### Infantile Sectarianism

Now, I read those sections that relate to trade union work over and over and over again. And my final conclusion -- so far as I can make head or tail out of it at all -- is that either Dobbs is working himself up to the idea to form now a new left wing in the unions; or the policy consists simply of verbiage, reducing the whole question to foggy verbosity, to clichés and banalities. And there are sections in the article that lend themselves to either theory.

We find Dobbs' vacuum theory of 1951 back with us again in the current document, although so qualified now as to virtually drain it of all content. Then we read: "Our task is to fill this political void with a body of left-wing militants, armed with our program, who

will become the actual leaders of more and more workers even though they hold only minor union posts or no official posts at all." If this has any meaning, it is to build a new left wing. And if the infantile adventuristic policy is not enough, an additional infantile sectarian twist seems to be added that the left wing is to be built around the SWP and its program. I see that the Organizer's Report of Los Angeles issued in February of this year, and unanimously adopted out there by your co-factionalists declares very bluntly: "The main task of our fractions is to work for the building of a left wing in the unions."

I'll not discuss now who gave your co-thinkers in Los Angeles authority to reverse our national trade union policy. Let me say this on the question itself: If you are bracing yourself to advocating the building of a left wing in the unions today on the basis of your unreal analysis of what the score is in the labor movement, you have a policy that will disorient our cadres; and if they are sent out into the mass movement with this YPSL adventuristic line, they are guaranteed to break their necks. And I warrant you that our leading trade union comrades, who have over fifteen years of variegated experience in the battle, will rise up and repudiate any such imposition upon them, and upon the party.

You not only oppose our present trade union policy. You take issue with our trade union policy from the very formation of our party. I must, of course, thank you for your generosity in not unloading the whole responsibility of this alleged error upon my shoulders. But, all the same, I have to come to the defense here of some of your associates. I do not know from your article what it is you are talking about; or what it is you want. If you have a point to make, why don't you make it. If you have a different slant on the matter of our past 15 years work in the unions, why don't you tell us precisely what it is you stand for. As it is, we have nothing to go on to make a judgement except your bald assertions -- and that's not enough.

You write: "We have been excessively preoccupied with power blocs in the unions to the point that our policy has in reality tended to impair recruitment." You can't make a sweeping assertion like that without attempting to prove it. Do you think Marxist analysis simply consists of pompous proclamations? As an overall proposition, I question the correctness of the criticism. The criticism leaves me with the feeling that the problem of party recruitment is torn away from the context of the complex of our activity in the class struggle and viewed too exclusively from its administrative side.

Let us take a cursory glance, for a moment, of our leading trade union fraction, the auto fraction. After our break with Homer Martin in 1938, for a variety of reasons, we were not involved, nor did we support either of the major blocs in the UAW for a period of five years. We concentrated instead on trying to create local left wing groupings, pushing our programmatic demands, distributing literature, analyzing the broad trends in the union, and recruiting workers. We did yeoman's work along these lines for five years, but our successes in recruiting were quite modest. Only in the latter part of 1943 did we begin to cooperate with the left Reutherites, which developed into our cooperation with the No-Strike Pledge Caucus the following year, and then the support of the Reuther bloc during and following the GM strike of 1945-46.

Contrary to Dobbs' impressions, it was precisely in this latter period that recruiting into the Michigan organization reached its highest point. We recruited more workers from the unions in the 1943-1945 period than we had at any time before or since. I could relate a similar story by describing the work of our leading fractions in the other unions. This was the period, as everybody knows, that recruitment nationally was at its zenith.

### Dynamics of the Labor Movement

There is no mystery about the reasons if you understand the ups and downs and flow of the labor movement. The trade union has a life of its own. The most virile, the most intelligent members of the union inevitably get caught up in the activity and the political life of the organization. They become the local activists, the shop stewards, the chairmen of various union committees and bodies, the officers, the strike leaders, and in a period of inner-union struggle, the leading forces of the factions. At a time such as the present, when the unions are stagnant, these elements often become conservatized and corrupted, and are least susceptible to our message, least inclined to join our type of organization. In a period of upsurge and struggle, it is these activists who form the secondary leadership, and sometimes even the prime leadership and expression of the workers' struggles and aspirations.

These struggles inevitably produce different and opposing organized tendencies inside the unions. It has been our invariable experience that the periods when we are able to participate on a good basis with the militant activists in union political struggles are the very periods when the branches involved are blooming, find the greatest milieu for their efforts, when we have more workers coming around to our headquarters and affairs, and when we register the biggest successes in recruitment. Because periods of inner-union struggles represent only one aspect of rising militancy and activity of the organized workers. I am not speaking now of the wisdom of this or that tactical bloc, or relationship. That can only be discussed in the concrete. But to counterpose, in a sweeping generalization, recruitment to participation in the political struggles of the trade union movement reveals lack of understanding of the dynamics of building a party, at best, an over-simplified Socialist agitator's approach to the problem of recruitment, rather than that of a political, a Marxist mass leader.

In his resolve to draw every possible construction against us, Comrade Dobbs erupts with this in his concluding statements on the unions. He quotes the following remarks from my convention trade union report: "In the present period our trade union forces are often augmented by mere mechanical effort. But to really maintain and integrate trade union groups in these difficult days, the mechanical aspect is the least of the problem."

Then Dobbs goes on to say: "What Comrade Cochran dismisses by his reference to 'mechanical effort' is obviously the daily activity in the unions which is the essence of all mass work. He seems to think that the most important need for our work in the unions is to rush through his project to organize a committee of high-powered thinkers and writers. However, the comrades who carry on the foot-slogging day-to-day work in the unions know their work is important.

They like to have their leaders think it is important too. They want their leaders to give some attention, some thought and some aid to them in the ever so important daily grind out of which our union cadres are being forged today. They even like to have their leaders help them do a few chores now and then, and they do have chores because there are things that can be done in the unions."

Now, as everybody who listened to my Convention report knows, I was talking about people getting jobs in industry, colonizing comrades -- I repeated the point three-four times -- to augment our trade union forces. When my report was printed in the paper, the phraseology was slightly edited. Several comrades who were not present at the convention wrote me letters discussing my report with me, and none of them had any difficulty catching the meaning. But Comrade Dobbs, in his factional abandon to construct a case, could not even read my report without revealing his prejudice.

And while I'm on the subject, whom are you lecturing about "the foot-slogging day-to-day work in the unions?" Me? Our leaders in Detroit and Flint? Jules? Or our union activists in New York, Youngstown, San Francisco and Seattle? Aren't you forgetting who's who, and what's what? Do you really think that after 15-20 years of experience in the mass movement we have to have a report made presenting us with the revelation that -- Oh, yes! -- work can be done in the unions such as taking up a grievance, or talking about the Kutcher case? And do you think our leading trade union comrades are going to buy that kind of a report as presenting any kind of a line or policy for our work? Above all, what stands out in your report and remarks is the lack of any unified conception, the absence of any guiding thread running through your random observations, which sometimes border on the preposterous. And this final outburst will impress itself least favorably on our trade union leaders, who may conclude that beneath the solemn exterior is concealed a woeful lack of grasp of the dynamics of the labor movement; and an attempt to reduce all big questions to school-masterish exhortations, and homilies.

We cannot win workers today by demonstrating our program in action. Therefore, in the main, we have to win people by our ideas, our solutions, our ideological perspective. And to carry on in that capacity, and by those means, you need an understanding, and you need proper materials in the form of analysis, pamphlets, studies. We will impress advanced workers today, not primarily by good works, but by our clear outlook, an integrated perspective a cohesive line; and a tenacity to hold to our path; and keep our heads.

### What To Do Next

I don't know how extensively it is necessary for me to go into questions of whether we are an independent party, or a propaganda group, as our document deals fully with this aspect of the discussion.

We have heard in the past months the pronunciamento delivered dozens if not scores of times that our strategic aim is to build an independent mass revolutionary party, as if some new profound message is being uttered. We all know about that. We are all for it. That is why we are members of the Socialist Workers Party. But when you have stated this proposition, you haven't disposed of the



question. You are just at the starting point. All kinds of people wanted to build an independent mass revolutionary party in this country. Oehler wanted to build it. Weisbord wanted to build it. Muste wanted to build it. But they did not know how. The question inevitably arises, after you have established your aim and program, what to do next, what to do at every stage of the game to advance you toward your objective, how to seize hold of those threads available in the actual movement that will enable you to move forward toward the realization of your final goal.

We had to make that decision, time and again, when we fused with the Muste group, when we entered the Socialist Party, when we left the Socialist Party, when we executed a proletarianization policy, when we supported and blocked with groups in the mass movement. If we contented ourselves with simply proclaiming the independence of the party, and agitating the broad masses in favor of Socialism, that would have netted us very meagre results, and very possibly we would not have even survived.

Now, we are up against this very problem today: What to do next; what to do now. The country is in the grip of reaction and the witchhunt. We are isolated from the masses. And despite all the revolutionary chattering in our midst, no one knows exactly how long reaction will persist. Our strategic orientation is toward the mass trade union movement, because it is in that movement that the big struggles will find expression, and out of those ranks that the effectives for the revolutionary party must come. But that does not dispose of the question. Today this movement is quiescent. Today we are unable to recruit those workers, except for isolated individuals. We cannot, we do not approach the general mass, or sizeable sections of the mass in the unions. We approach individuals. If all the factors that go to make up the present situation do not cry out aloud for a thorough-going propagandistic approach to build in this period a significant cadre in the mass movement, then just what is the proper approach to the labor movement today? Just throwing words into the wind about our strategic orientation? That might be very consoling to some, but will not advance us one inch along the path toward its realization.

Let us go a little further into this matter.

The United States is the country par excellence of capitalist ideology and mode of thinking. Marxism has no standing in any sector of the population. The working class is hostile to it and views it as an alien philosophy. The youth in the colleges are brought up today in the spirit of militant anti-Marxism. A combination of circumstances, into which enter the treacheries of Stalinism have conspired to bring Marxism to the lowest state in its American history.

To organize a mass party in a vast and advanced country such as this one is a big and complicated work. It will never be done by simple Socialist agitation and good works alone. Other tendencies, with a more realistic grasp of the dynamism of the mass movement will inevitably overwhelm the simple-simon Socialist do-gooders. To talk seriously about organizing a mass revolutionary party in the United States means that you have to establish a definite political physiology for yourself. You have to conquer your enemies in ideological struggle. You have to win intellectually the most advanced elements of the working class and of the radical intelligentsia, especially

the youth. The task is still ahead of us, not behind us. Those who do not understand this had better stop talking about our tradition and Trotsky's teachings.

### A Propaganda Campaign

Well, it is in line with this approach that we proposed that the party organize a propaganda campaign, and devote sufficient thought, effort and finances to ensure its proper execution and success.\*

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\*Text of this document is published herewith as an appendix.

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Why this proposal, demanded by the entire situation in the country and our party's position, should have evoked the pious horror, the venom, the misrepresentations, the accusations of liquidationism and attempts to scuttle the independent party -- why it should have had this reaction is difficult to understand, except on the basis that some leading comrades have become disorientated. And, in an attempt to find something sure and solid to cling to, they have embraced a neo-Musteite orientation -- the thin, superficial viewpoint that by good works alone, ignoring and going over the heads of the vanguard straight to the virgin masses, we could outflank our opponents and avoid all complexities in the building of a party.

This fierce and hostile reaction of a section of the leadership is all the more unexplainable as there is nothing new or original about the proposal. Cannon made the identical proposal four years ago -- and if you delved into Trotsky's correspondence you would find the thought wasn't even original with Cannon. Let me read you sections of Cannon's memorandum called, "Proposals for a Propaganda Campaign," submitted on Nov. 3, 1948, right after the 1948 election campaign:

"In the recent years the party has devoted its activity increasingly to practical work of organization and agitation, culminating in the election campaign in which general anti-capitalist agitation absorbed almost the entire energy of the party. In the period following the election, we should aim at a synthesis under which the thought and time and energy of the party will be about equally divided between agitation and propaganda, with special emphasis on polemical struggle against opponent organizations and tendencies in the more politically conscious sections of the labor movement. The necessity for this readjustment can be demonstrated by an examination of the facts of the situation and the relation of forces. . . . It is a fallacy, however, to think that our party members can do this [resist hostile pressures] without the most thorough conviction that what we are fighting for is not only right and good but scientifically correct and realizable. There are many revolutionary elements who have come into our party on the basis of campaigns of struggle against specific instances of capitalist injustice and oppression, or in common fights with the party members for limited aims in the trade unions. Even the oldest cadres of the party become preoccupied with the daily struggle, the secondary questions of tactics and maneuver. Agitational campaigns and practical trade union struggles for specific aims are necessary methods for the recruitment of new people, but of themselves are not sufficient to equip the new recruits for the long pull. A farsighted theoretical outlook hammered out in unceasing polemical struggle against all our opponents -- this alone can renew and sustain

the devotion and self-sacrifice of our party members, new recruits and sympathizers. . . The party cannot grow and prosper by simple anti-capitalist agitation and good works alone. It must combat and defeat every attempt to smuggle bourgeois ideology into the labor movement under guise of a workers' program. Otherwise the good works will be wasted and the workers' vanguard will be demoralized and disrupted by the brutal offensive of revisionism and renegacy in the service of American imperialism. Following the presidential election campaign, the party leadership must organize a counter-offensive -- a thorough-going campaign of propaganda, theoretical controversy and ideological re-examination of all questions which have been subjected to discussion and criticisms by our enemies. . . The atmosphere of intense interest in fundamental principles which dominated our movement in the early years can now recharge the party with the only power source of sustained and devoted activity for the revolution -- profound theoretical conviction. In the process of unfolding our ideological counter-offensive, we would systematically, and with ruthless scientific honesty, undertake to re-evaluate, from the point of view of Marxist orthodoxy, all those questions which the renegades want to re-evaluate from the point of view of flight from the proletarian struggle. The central objective of our campaign should be to launch a systematic, highly planned and organized struggle to establish the hegemony of Marxism in the field of social theory. . ."

Why was this proposal adopted unanimously by the National Committee four years ago, and why is it liquidationist heresy today? Can we have that explained to us? We did not carry out the proposal, because of inertia at first. Then soon afterwards, because our discussions on Eastern Europe revealed that we did not share a common viewpoint. We had to straighten matters out in our own heads before we could straighten out other peoples thinking. But the proposal remains a good one, and has become a crying necessity for our movement both internally, and externally, to fix our mark on the American political scene.

As our Document goes to great pains to make clear, the fact that the Propaganda Campaign is one of our primary tasks in no wise invalidates all sorts of other activities, election campaigns, defense work, etc., etc., which we are pursuing and should continue to pursue, commensurate with our over-all resources, capacities and strength. Comrade Dobbs complains, however, that we want a propaganda campaign as the top plank of the tasks of the party. He wants it, presumably, as the bottom plank, (if at all). Why can't we compromise the issue? Let us agree on Cannon's 1948 formula, "a synthesis under which the thought and time and energy of the party will be about equally divided between agitation and propaganda." Let us settle it on that basis. Fifty-fifty.

### Sectarian and Ultamatist Moods

Our attempt to circumvent this necessary tactic, this unpost-ponable re-arming of the party, and your false counter-position to it of the independence of the party, as a new mysticism, is creating havoc with your own thinking, and driving you towards sectarian and ultimatist moods, toward Musteite conceptions and over-simplifications of how the mass party is going to be created. The first fruits of your campaign have already appeared. Your supporters in New York are embarked on a path of infantile adventurism. Your people in Los

Angeles are advocating the building today of a left wing in the unions. Your supporters in Seattle are whirling dizzily on a pin-wheel of synthetic activity, propelled by a self-appointed "professional leadership." These are the real results of your artificially contrived campaign for the so-called independence of the party. You are leading yourselves and your supporters to disorientation and demoralization. And we urge you: Get back to the tradition of our movement. Get back to our old way of viewing and resolving problems of the class struggle and party-building. Get back to the path and the world of Marxist reality. For the good of yourselves. And the good of the party.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Outline of Party Tasks in concluding remarks of Cochran's rebuttal speech:

1. We propose that we act as an independent party to the degree that we can, that it is practically possible. We propose to engage in general party activities commensurate with our resources, and our over-all tasks.

2. We propose to continue to pursue propagandistic aims in the mass movement, and to make a determined and special effort to supply our comrades with the most effective possible propaganda material to enrich and fructify their work in the unions.

3. We propose to launch a major propaganda campaign, and devote to it sufficient resources and finances to ensure its success. We propose that it be done on the basis of Cannon's 1948 formula: An equal division between agitation and propaganda.

4. We propose where practicable a tactic toward the Stalinist workers and the Stalinist-influenced organizations along the lines prescribed in the Party Resolution.

5. This platform of party activity, to be governed by a correct over-all political understanding, must be based upon a recognition of the Third World Congress positions as a basic re-evaluation and re-arming of our world movement; and a recognition of the Resolution of our latest Party Convention, in all of its aspects, as providing the necessary flexible approach to solving our tasks in the immediate period ahead.

# # #

PROPOSAL FOR MARXIST PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN

Submitted by Clarke

(The following document was submitted as an amendment to the Political Resolution at a Political Committee meeting prior to the May 1952 Plenum. It was rejected by the PC despite its essential similarity to the Cannon proposal for a Propaganda Campaign adopted by the December 1938 Plenum. Clarke withdrew this proposal at the May 1952 Plenum making the following statement:

"I withdraw this proposal from consideration at the Plenum at this time. I have not changed my opinion by one iota as to the vital, preeminent importance of the need for our leadership to cope with the problems of living Marxism as one of its major tasks. It is obvious, however, that this question cannot be given the objective consideration it deserves at this Plenum. I, therefore, consider it necessary to postpone discussion and action on this proposal until such a time when the committee can deal with it with all the realism it deserves.

Only a hardened factionalist, we are convinced can read this resolution and come to the conclusion that it was a sign of "unprincipled politics" or of a tendency to "liquidationism," etc., as has been so freely charged in the present struggle. The attempt to counterpose the Trotsky School to this proposal was clearly and obviously designed to prevent any objective consideration of it.  
-- G.C.)

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The ideological task facing us today is clearly marked out by the nature of the American political scene as well as by the evolution of our own movement. It is an aggressive defense of Marxism against all its opponents and a thorough-going work of application of Marxist theory to the problem of U.S. capitalism.

Supplemented by the ideological armour provided, in the world outlook on the decisive approaching struggles, on the war and on Stalinism set forth in the analyses of the World Congress -- which should be thoroughly assimilated by every member of the party -- this concentration on "Americanizing" Marx will raise the political level of our own membership, provide the conscious understanding on which confidence in the future must be founded in order to survive a period of isolation, reaction and repression; it will moreover begin to make a serious impact on discontented workers, students and intellectuals by giving our movement a political physiognomy -- that of the defenders of Marxism -- which no other tendency in left-wing circles today possesses.

Since the outset of the "cold war" the American capitalist class itself has deliberately made Marxism a central question of political controversy. There is rarely a speech of an important political, government or academic figure without reference to it. Popular journals, advertising agencies and all mediums of public opinion have been mobilized in this ideological war whose central themes are that the U.S. has escaped the laws of capitalist development and the class struggle, that conditions of life are superior here to those prevailing in the countries where "Marxism" has triumphed. If this

propaganda has a certain effectiveness because it is based on a half-truth, its weakness derives from the fact that its principal advocates are the representatives of the giant monopolies whose basic proposals for fighting Marxism are the witchhunt and world war. Thus ideas are being joined directly to the two major trends which undermine the bourgeois argument against Marxism and must eventually create the conditions for a polarization of American society both in thought and in action.

For our own movement the task is unpostponable. The radical milieu in which we functioned in the Thirties and where we defended genuine Marxism against other tendencies who also laid claim to its banner has almost completely disappeared. In one form or another all of these tendencies have capitulated to bourgeois thought accepting capitalist democracy as the "lesser evil" which in turn has adapted their bag of arguments for its struggle against Marxism. Our task is thus that of direct struggle with bourgeois ideology in explaining both the evolution of U.S. capitalism and of Stalinism. It is in this way that we will build a new periphery and train new cadres.

This work of propaganda and analysis must become a central task of the party leadership in the next period. Organizational means should be devised to change the character of the magazine in line with the aims and needs of the propaganda campaign, to plan a series of studies and pamphlets on the most important questions of American politics, economics, the specific form of evolution of the American workers' movement and to engage in polemics with the anti-Marxists in all spheres of theory and international developments. Leading comrades should be freed, as much as possible of other tasks, material means placed at their disposal within the financial resources of the party and subordinated to the needs of maintaining a functioning national center and press. The party as a whole should be alerted as to the meaning and progress of the propaganda campaign and the educational program in Marxist fundamentals carried on in the branches should become closely tied to this theoretical activity. In addition to literary activity the program envisages a national lecture program on a continuing basis and the transformation of the magazine to meet out ideological needs in the U.S.

# # #

WHERE I STAND

By Genora Dollinger (Flint)

Comrades: From reports I have received there is a great deal of misunderstanding as to my having a separate position, having no position or "sitting on the fence." As a result I feel obligated to explain just where I stand in the present dispute in our ranks. It is true that I have refused, for the past months since the '52 convention to take a position on so serious a matter on the basis of isolated facts, rumors, charges, or what individual comrades averred were the issues in dispute. I have never hesitated to take a stand on any question when I felt I possessed enough information to justify such an act. But in the present dispute I have persistently maintained my right to wait until documents appeared with the main positions outlined clearly and unambiguously. When comrades on the N.C. -- and at least one on the P.C. -- state frankly they don't know just what is involved it certainly justifies the neutral independence of a comrade in the field when such a serious controversy is even indicated until he or she has carefully studied and weighed the opposing positions.

We have spent too many precious years building our cadre party to jeopardize this glorious and historic accomplishment in any way. We have broken off too many comfortable personal relationships in the past when these associations have become inimical to the welfare of our revolutionary program to lightly let ourselves be personally influenced by comrades -- even those whom we revere deeply and respect highly for past contributions to our movement. For 16 years the party has been my life and the comrades my closest and dearest travellers along this chosen path. It is not easy to take a principled stand against some of my comrades of long years -- but then it was not easy to watch our former comrade Grace abandon our great cause and become again a part of the biggest single fort of reaction and oppression. Every adult is forced to make important and difficult decisions in his life; and a principled person professing to be a Bolshevik cannot decide issues on the basis of special friendships -- nor waver nor hesitate when the facts are laid on the table.

For these reasons I refused adamantly to take a position until I had in black and white the fundamental facts and the statements of the opposing sides on something more than possible "embryonic differences." This, I can assure you, is not a popular position to take either; but it is the only honest one.

From the bulletins on the New York discussion I first got a glimmer of what was involved; but I awaited the statements in the national dispute before I felt I could evaluate and compare from my own understanding and experiences.

First let me state categorically and emphatically that when the Thesis of the 3rd World Congress appeared I accepted it as a truly gigantic and historic document, a great signpost and marker that will go down in the history of world Trotskyism. This Congress, meeting in the period of world confusion, for the first time threw the spotlight of clarity on such difficult questions for us in the march of world events as Yugoslavia, the Eastern European States, and China. It gave me reassurance that Trotskyism is a living, breathing,

dynamic force in spite of its present numbers. When Pablo's popularization of this Theses was issued I read and re-read it. Pablo's contributions to this new orientation, this fundamental realignment of our forces in the struggle toward our final goal, has been the most profound and, without a doubt, the greatest of all since the death of our leader and founder.

It never occurred to me once that the magnificent achievements of the 3rd World Congress could be otherwise considered than just that -- by the world movement or any part of it. Admitting my optimism and naivete in this respect I refused to believe that differences in the American party could have its roots in acceptance or non-acceptance of the essence and method of this big contribution to our thinking and our revolutionary re-orientation in general. I was convinced that the factional differences arose from an incorrect appraisal of the stage of development on the home scene.

Realizing that a faction fight is often the price we must pay to obtain theoretical clarity -- and rejecting all verbal reports -- I awaited with great eagerness and expectations for the discussion bulletins summarizing the disagreements.

As one of our many comrades in the movement who has been ever ready and willing to carry the revolutionary banner of our party in line of duty, regardless of personal consequences, I have had confidence in our collective leadership and in our collective decisions. Never having had any illusions about the infallibility of any individual leader of our party I have watched while they, like I, have made mistakes. But those minor mistakes over the 16 years of my party membership have been corrected before they became major ones, and my confidence in the collective leadership has only been strengthened through these experiences.

### The World Congress and Comrade Hansen

When Comrade Hansen's article in the first bulletin arrived I read it with anticipation, hoping that some light would be shed on the differences that every comrade knew existed -- at least from the '52 convention on.

Leaving aside Hansen's synthesis of the opposing position -- which one could not think of accepting as legitimate -- the obvious lack of agreement with the 3rd World Congress thesis was most apparent. It stood out in bold relief in Hansen's paraphrasing of their emphasis on the nature of Stalinism in the present period. (And this is his famous "summary statement" that he "thinks" our co-thinkers abroad would "possibly" agree with.) To quote from What the New York Discussion Has Revealed on pg. 13: ". . . Stalinism can no longer betray with the same facility (my emphasis -- G.D.) as when it could maneuver between opposing imperialist powers and make perfidious deals with one camp or another. But the same general conditions that narrow the possibility of a long-term deal also foster revolutionary movements which the Stalinist caste fears. Hence the betrayals of Stalinism tend to take other forms besides open deals with imperialism at the expense of the proletariat. It is evident that in the period now facing us of settlement of final accounts, the Soviet bureaucracy will provide us with some demonstrations of the most abominable betrayals ever perpetrated by it against the world socialist revolution." (my emphasis, G.D.)



This last sentence is but one of the main keys to Hansen's rejection of the whole intent and purpose of the theses.

Contrast these quotes from Pablo's interpretation of the same thesis: "The relations between the Soviet bureaucracy, the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary movement in each country, are in the process of changing under the effect of this new dynamism of the proletarian revolution. . . We have already seen what changes have been produced in the specific relations between the Soviet bureaucracy, the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary movement of the masses during the recent war and since, both in the Yugoslav example and in the case of China. . . Under pressure from a situation which is evolving toward war and the decisive and final struggle, wherever they maintain a genuine mass influence the opportunism of the Stalinist leaderships is obliged to yield less to the arbitrary swings ordered by the Kremlin, and thus to transform itself into centrism." (The Coming World Showdown, pp. 46-7)

To me, Hansen's summary is a complete contradiction and rejection of the present nature of Stalinism which the theses took such pains to evaluate and explain to the world movement as justification for the reorientation and redeployment of its forces.

In this period world events are not long in substantiating or refuting a position. Stop and reflect for a moment on the developments of extreme significance that have taken place in the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc just since the death of that "infallible leader" Stalin! All recent reports in the world press indicate an accelerated process of fermentation in the Soviet world, the jockeying for positions on the part of the "collective leadership" of the Soviet bureaucracy, the freeing of common prisoners and the lowering of prices, the public repudiation of the latest Moscow purge frame-up -- its significance and resulting consternation in the Stalinist parties of the world -- the enhancement of Mao Tse-tung's prestige, the hesitation and wavering of the Stalinist bureaucrats all over the world. What does all this mean but more elbow room (to use a union term) for the masses under their leadership? This is proof renewed that Stalinism is in a state of crisis and change. And given the flow of objective world circumstances, the depth of this crisis, the tempo of this change will tend to become more rapid, and will sound the end of Stalinism.

The period has passed when the Kremlin bureaucracy -- or Stalinist reaction -- can create an absolute bureaucratic obstacle in the path of inevitable revolutionary upsurges. Indeed Pablo is a hundred times correct when he says in a certain sense Stalinism died before Stalin. Add to this the all-out drive of imperialism against the Soviet bloc that cuts off the possibilities of durable deals with the imperialist nations. Agreed that Stalinism, until its rotten carcass is buried by world revolution, is capable of gross betrayals, where does the certainty of "the most abominable betrayals ever perpetrated by it against the world socialist revolution" fit in? What factors in the present trend of world development will give rise to such an inevitability? (Hansen does not even give it as a probability.) How does this jibe with the Theses and the prediction of the direction and trend toward centrism?

To sing the same tune in the same key now, comrades, reflects the fact that you have not grasped the new reality.

I was left with the distinct impression that one comrade, Joe Hansen, did not understand, or only deludes himself when he says he accepts, the theses of the World Congress; and for these reasons was certainly unable to apply it to the United States.

I am waiting for the so-called majority to officially repudiate this lack of understanding or, in my opinion, this outright rejection of the changing nature of Stalinism. The articles of the majority which have been followed by C. Thomas and Dobbs only carried on this theme in a different and more disguised form. Presuming that Thomas and Dobbs are also representatives of the majority I can only conclude that the roots of this factional fight are precisely lodged in the position taken by the 3rd World Congress. No mere lip service can cover up this fundamental disagreement.

And no charges of "subversive motives not fully expressed" ("except by individual slips of the tongue") can be used as a cover up either. Much space has been devoted to erecting a smokescreen to hide the real issues.

### Smokescreen Charges

I am not too concerned about what a certain who said to a certain whom in some particular place on a particular date. Such versions of verbal exchanges are too often tailored, consciously or unconsciously, to fit the particular needs of the reporter. And I reject completely, as unworthy of serious consideration the Conan-Doyle charge of "smuggling" operations and "sneak attacks" in our party. I want fundamental political facts substantiated by documents or official reports -- not a detective story of a smuggling ring or second-story artists. Not in our party! If the accusers tell us these are political charges then let them give such alleged acts a political name. Otherwise they produce unanswered questions in the minds of serious comrades.

Why would any responsible comrade who has built a reputation in our movement over the years resort to "smuggling"? What would motivate a comrade, or comrades, in resorting to such a practice instead of stating his position openly and frankly and honestly? Are they utterly dishonest characters who may have been trustworthy in the past but certainly not worthy of their posts now? Is it not possible that the accused comrades may have been in the process of working out their full position and proposals flowing from it? Or do objective conditions in the leadership, and the PC in particular, exist which militate against a full development of a position without reprisal action in the form of slanderous charges of "sneak attacks" and "smuggling"? These are only some of the questions that have crossed my mind as a result of the "smuggling, sneak attack" charge. At any rate it doesn't reflect favorably upon the accusers that such big time operations reportedly endangering Trotskyism in this country (which C. Thomas informs us they were aware of for a full year) without the membership being told about it.

## Independent Party -- What Is Meant By This?

There has been so much said about giving up our role as an independent party and yet I, for one, cannot understand the sense in which it is used by spokesmen for the majority. Cannot an independent party emphasize its propaganda activity -- or even consider itself a propaganda group under circumstances such as the present -- if the needs of the times so dictate, without losing its identity and independence? What determines the type of party we shall be?

Objective circumstances and the consciousness of the American workers is going to determine basically whether we are going to have a propaganda group or a little, medium or big party of mass action. We cannot get around this. Certainly if all that was necessary to have a mass action party is our desire, our will, or our determination we'd have it without delay. It is not for us to worry that we might "degenerate" into a small propaganda group if present objective conditions do not permit us to operate as we did in 1945 or 1946 -- but to adapt ourselves realistically to the limitations imposed by the period.

Comrade Dobbs tells us all the ways "worker militancy" can be "generated" by objective circumstances. I agree with him. And all of us know that it is inevitable that the American workers will move in due time and in their own inimitable fashion. But unlike Comrade Joyce Cowley I do not go to the workers a few hours a day for "refreshment." All my adult life I have done little else but work, eat, talk and live with mass production workers. After the privilege I've had of living through and actively participating in the great days of industrial union organization there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can shake my confidence in the American working class. And if one needed any further optimism in this respect, my 11 years active role in the NAACP and Negro work has only enhanced my confidence in the American working class and this particular section of it.

But for the whole past period and today and tomorrow we can't proceed on the basis of the inevitable upsurge of the American workers.

The majority spokesmen speak much of "molecular processes" going on in the American working class; but they pose this question in an entirely vacuous fashion. It is given no content and has no particular use for us when posed in such a manner. When we speak of a "molecular process" it has significance only in so far as it is used concretely within the framework of the experiences of the American working class. A "molecular process" has an entirely different significance when used in understanding the present developments in the English working class than when used in gauging the present developments of the American working class. The differences may be one of degree -- but that degree is what makes the qualitative difference and determines the nature of our tactics in these two countries.

The mills of the gods grind exceedingly slow but exceedingly fine. And from my experience the American workers are slow to move but once moved they are exceedingly volcanic. Is Comrade Dobbs afraid that we'll be organizationally unprepared to detect or take advantage of the beginnings of awakening of this quiescent giant? Does our past record give any indication of this? Does the record, for instance in auto, show this?

This section of the party -- the auto fraction -- has proven its ability to rush into the slightest possible opening in the union movement to put forward our transitional demands. Recall our work (and our tiny forces in this huge union) on the Labor Party, No-Strike pledge, the Detroit Cadillac Square demonstration against the Taft-Hartley Act, the sliding scale of wages known as the escalator clause (which still has the Stalinists gasping and grumbling) to mention only some of our accomplishments. These parts of our program were put into effect by our experienced and trained comrades taking consistent -- and often very rapid -- action; and sometimes under the most unexpected circumstances. Recall, please, that this whole proletarian section of the party is now being charged by Comrade Dobbs with drawing "pessimistic conclusions from the present ascendancy of reaction and the ebb in the class struggle here. . .", and having an incorrect "attitude toward perspective and present possibilities lodged in the class struggle in America," by Hansen.

Comrades, the danger is a clear and present one now. In the past it was not too difficult (although it took some powerful persuasion on more than one outstanding occasion) to convince the leadership of what was the indicated course of action in a given period. But today the majority leadership refuses to listen to the rank and file worker comrades operating with all their experience and training in the movement. Or if they listen they give no indication that they have heard. Instead these proletarian cadres are charged with "pessimism" and looking for "substitutes."

For many years Michigan comrades have requested that our role in the organization and building of the U.A.W. be published in pamphlet form. This record of ours is one of no small accomplishments in the world's largest and most progressive union. It could be used to full advantage, not only in the auto section, but by all comrades and sympathizers in unions -- and particularly in such a period as we face today. This request was not acted on until the faction fight broke out in earnest -- and then not done in anything resembling a serious manner. The comrades of the leadership made the gesture in acceding to the demands of the Michigan comrades for the writing of such an important pamphlet by proposing a comrade for the task who has never been in auto and knows little of the past history of the UAW. This, in spite of the fact, that we have fully qualified people available to do a thorough-going job. It's an unfortunate commentary on the attitude of the leadership toward those possibilities that really are open to us today.

Is it heresy to want to educate workers in the Trotskyist method by means of such an instructive pamphlet? If objective conditions make us what we are in reality today, a propaganda group in the working class movement, should we not publicize our role and accomplishments in former mass actions -- in preparation for the next upsurge of the workers?

Again I repeat: Objective circumstances and the consciousness of the American workers is going to determine basically whether we are going to be a propaganda group or a little, medium, or big size party of mass action.

And I reiterate that the charge of pessimism is facetious against comrades in this section of the mass movement who are not writing

their views far removed from the class struggle, but facing living reality every day of their lives. When comrades today brave threats of physical violence in carrying out their consistent activity as revolutionary propagandists in the trade union movement and courageously proceed, step by step, to give the more advanced workers a Trotskyist understanding of present developments -- is this pessimism or optimism?

And what in thunder does the recent Sub campaign of the paper prove? That our whole cadre has suddenly become lazy or indolent or pessimists? On the contrary. Each branch can report the number of old time subscribers who are now afraid of receiving the paper through the mail or having any connection with the ideas of Marxism. I don't need to tell you this after all the work put into this campaign. Yet the results might better have been announced in letters to the branches. Worker militants here expressed surprise that we advertised our weakness. In a coast to coast campaign we didn't get subscriptions and renewals expected in the state of Michigan alone. Ordinary unionists know that there are times when publishing an actual strike vote would be a mistake and weaken their cause. Certainly, for good reasons, we don't have to advertise that we are so small with so few actual readers of our weekly press. And yet, after such free advertisement we're deadly afraid of being called a propaganda group!

#### The So-called "Unprincipled Bloc"

Now I wish to raise just one final point in this short and by no means complete article. The grave charge of the minority being called an unprincipled bloc. A faction fight is not known for praising the work or contributions of individual comrades. A faction development presupposes political differences, and actions substantiating these disagreements are ferretted out to prove the line of demarcation. But an unprincipled bloc is a serious charge against a faction as a whole. Certainly there will not be complete agreement on every question raised on either side. However, unprincipled bloc means none other than grouping together for unprincipled and un-Bolshevik reasons.

I take my stand openly and frankly with the minority faction because it is a principled grouping within our party based on a principled Marxist position. The minority comrades are basing their whole program and winning adherents to this position on the basis of a correct understanding and appreciation of the Theses of the 3rd World Congress. The comrades of the minority have demonstrated by their official position and their writings that they have a more thoroughgoing and penetrating understanding of the American working class and its present stage of development, the relationship between this stage of development and our world perspectives, and flowing from this understanding a more realistic program of action for our Trotskyist cadre here in the United States.

This and this alone binds together the comrades of the minority tendency. I can assure you, comrades, that I was not won over by any means calculated to win friends and influence people. Quite the contrary! The statement of position signed by ten leading members of our party titled The Roots of the Party Crisis -- its Causes and

Solution is what decided my place in this dispute. It is the tendency that I endorse completely and wholeheartedly.

And due to my revolutionary optimism -- both in regards to the proletariat and its advance guard, the American Trotskyist party -- I firmly believe that this position will become the majority position of the party. I am firmly convinced that the worker comrades will cut through all the subterfuge and detective story drama and Preis-Winchell reporting of comrades' reactions and facial expressions, the slanderous denigrations, and decide on the basis of the issues involved. And those of our top leadership who have grasped the essence of the Theses of the 3rd World Congress and have consulted the vanguard ranks as to the American climate, will be with us. We all remember Lenin's remarks about major turns of the revolutionary party. Events will not be long in showing the correctness of our tactics flowing from our understanding of Marxist principles. In this respect some of our comrades may be saved from old habits and going afield in a sectarian manner.

A great step in the right direction would be a repudiation of the Hansen method. In spite of Hansen's throwing around words, phrases, and quotes with ease -- and apparent abandon! -- he uses formal logic and produces nothing but confusion when we so sorely need the dialectical materialist approach to aid us in solving the big problems that face us and the bigger ones to come.

I look forward to the discussion proceeding on a higher level, to a further education of our party in principles of Marxism, and to a qualitatively better trained American cadre as a result. The Third World Congress has shown us the road in the present period. Let's not hesitate to diligently assimilate the lessons contained in this political re-orientation and apply them to the reality of the American scene in any given period. In this way and only this way will we be armed for the American revolution -- the decisive phase of the decisive coming world show down.

May 6, 1953

AN EXAMPLE OF SECTARIANISM

The Chicago Position on the Progressive Party

by Michael Bartell

We publish for the information of the party the following two motions on tactics toward the conflict in the Progressive Party.

\* \* \*

MEMO ON PROGRESSIVE PARTY --- by Ex. Comm. Majority.

In our approach to the Progressive Party and the Stalinist proposal to dissolve it into the Democratic Party, we base ourselves on the Political Resolution of the last National Convention and its attitude to such opponents work. Any action taken locally, however, to implement this general orientation should be considered only at such time as sufficient information is available on the composition, functioning and nature of PP units in this area, and should be taken in consultation with the PC of our party.

Our political aim, in whatever work in this milieu proves appropriate and feasible, is twofold: 1. recruit to the SWP; 2. destroy the remnants of the PP as an independent organization.

We recognize the progressive aspects of the internal revolt against the Stalinists within the PP on the part of those who do not wish to dissolve into the Democratic Party. This is outweighed, however, by the continued existence of an opponent organization. Our tactic within the PP has nothing in common with fraction work within unions, NAACP, etc. This is opponents work as traditionally considered.

Practical work in relation to this question is at all times to be considered subordinate to regular work of the party as an independent organization -- such as the paper Campaign, May Day Banquet, Trade Union Fraction work, Assignments for fraction work in NAACP, internal discussion.

The purpose of this memorandum is to keep the Political Committee informed on our work in this field and request consultation (in conformity with the last convention directive) on the political line to be followed.

(Voted on by Executive Committee April 7th.

For this Majority Memo -- 5 Also 3 alternates present -for.

Minority Memo defeated -- 5 against & 3 alternates present against. 3 for.)

MEMO ON PROGRESSIVE PARTY (by Beinlin for Minority)

The decline of the Progressive Party, manifested both in its loss of important bourgeois allies and in its transformation from a mass party of 1948 to a radical tendency which counted its votes in the thousands in 1952, has produced a crisis of perspective in that party.

The Stalinist proposal to disband the PP and have its members join the Democratic Party for the stated purpose of pushing for a labor party, has created a serious discussion and a sharp division there. What is of greatest interest to us in this internal conflict is that non-CP elements in the PP vigorously oppose dissolution into the Democratic Party: instead there come from this section of the party proposals for the PP to openly espouse socialism and to advocate building a labor party. These attacks on the CP position come from the left. There is a section of the PP today, whose political physiognomy is not yet clearly defined, which is looking for answers to the crisis of perspective, not in the extension of class collaboration politics, but in a radical direction.

The recent experience in Chicago and Illinois follows this pattern. The PP membership here has over-ridden the proposal for dissolution made by its State Committee. It has defeated the Stalinist line and voted to continue its existence. But this in no way alleviates the perspective crisis in the party.

One of the factors which impelled them to vote down their leaders' proposal was the vigorous opposition put up by one of the smaller, suburban groups -- which could not stomach the idea of going into the Democratic Party. At first this was the only PP unit which officially opposed the State Committee line, though there was widespread dissatisfaction with it. The upshot of the discussion at a couple of membership meetings was that the position of this group carried the day.

We have already benefited from this situation. One of the members of the group, repelled by the Stalinist proposal sought consultation with us. We not only advised him to carry on a fight against the reactionary Stalinist proposal, but also got him to read our literature and attend our public meetings. He has joined us. This occurred even though we did not intervene in the situation until he came to us.

We can easily foresee that participation in the current discussion in the PP by a few Trotskyists could lead to creation of a center of opposition around our people and our viewpoint which would become a bridge to recruitment into our party.

To accomplish this it is necessary to send some people into the PP to do opponents work. We propose that the new recruit retain his membership and continue to be active in the PP. In addition we should assign two comrades to work with him since this group has shown some promise both in the stand it took and in its composition. Another comrade, under instructions of a sub-committee has already joined the PP in a different area.



Our general orientation to local PP work should be based on the Political Resolution of the 1952 convention. Our comrades in the PP should -- at this stage -- refrain from placing barriers between themselves and the PP membership. Our approach should be one of patient explanation and Marxist education -- based on the level of consciousness of those we work with. Above all, we must begin with what we have in common with them. In the specific instance of this club, they have expressed disagreement with class collaboration politics and are for the formation of a labor party. And like all PP clubs they oppose the US war in Korea and imperialism's preparations for a Third World War. This is where to begin.

Our object should be to clarify their still hazy, unscientific un-Marxist thinking on these questions. This should be done both by speaking on the floor and especially in discussions with individuals. The road would thus be prepared for the club as a unit to make specific proposals and statements at the proper time and of the proper nature to the city-wide PP. It could thus channelize the discussions around questions from which we have the most to gain while the Stalinists and the PP itself can only lose.

As in all cases of opponents work, the comrades assigned to this task should collaborate closely with the organizer and the executive committee.

\* \* \*

The conflicting positions (published above) of the two tendencies in the Chicago branch on our tactical policy toward the Progressive Party shed considerable light on the nature of the tendencies emerging within our party nationally. While the issue in itself is not a life-or-death question, it represents a test in practice of the method and approach of the opposing tendencies. The differences here are not nebulous or elusive. The positions are directly counterposed, clear and unmistakable, and therefore the controversy should be of great help to comrades who have had difficulty in discerning the nature of the differences.

The facts are clearly established. The Stalinist-controlled Illinois State Committee of the PP proposed, in line with national CP policy, to liquidate the party into the Democratic Party. A majority of the ranks rebelled against this reactionary, opportunist proposal. One PP member, as a consequence of this struggle, has already joined the SWP. A tendency exists in the ranks which proposes that the PP adopt a socialist program and advocate the building of a labor party.

It should be apparent even to the blindest sectarian that this situation presents us with an opportunity, even if a small one, to make some gains at the expense of the Stalinists. The question is how? The answers given by the two groupings are extremely revealing. They are not accidental -- on the contrary, they are thoroughly characteristic. Indeed, they could have been predicted in advance.

The comrades of the majority were true to themselves. They reacted in true sectarian fashion. It is to their credit that for once they did not altogether conceal or befuddle their position out

of fear of exposing the real political inclinations of their group. By so doing they have made an important contribution toward introducing some clarity into the discussion.

Here is the question in a nutshell: The party is confronted with a live situation in an opponent organization where serious internal conflict creates an opening for our intervention. Shall we intervene promptly, effectively so as to influence the course of the struggle to our advantage? Not so fast, says the majority. This work is "at all times to be considered subordinate to the regular work of the party as an independent organization." Before any personnel, time or attention are to be allocated to this obviously "subordinate," "irregular," activity, all "regular" "independent" activities have to be taken care of first. This was spelled out more concretely in the original draft: "In making personnel assignments for opponents work in the PP, we consider that the following activities take priority in the next period (not necessarily in order of importance): (1) the paper campaign (2) May Day banquet (3) regularization of trade union fraction meetings (4) assignments for fraction work in NAACP (5) internal discussion."

In other words, this type of activity must be relegated to last place on the agenda "at all times." It is not relegated to an inferior position, as you can see, because of more important activity among the broad masses of non-political workers, nor because of any project of acting as the "revolutionary leadership" of the masses. No, the work is deliberately sacrificed for routine and internal activities. It is a conscious attempt to turn the face of the party inward.

But, assuming they finally get to the sixth point on the agenda and find some comrades to assign to this "subordinate" work (after all assignments have been made for the banquet, internal discussion, etc., etc.) the next question is: What tactic should these comrades employ in this situation?

The comrades of the majority "recognize the progressive aspects of the internal revolt against the Stalinists within the PP on the part of those who do not wish to dissolve into the Democratic Party." So far so good. Should our fraction then support this "revolt" and attempt to steer it, or a section of it, in the direction of revolutionary socialism, i.e., toward Trotskyism? Nothing doing. The "progressive aspects of the internal revolt" are "outweighed, however, by the continued existence of an opponent organization." The original draft spelled out the conclusion: "Therefore we have no interest in conducting ourselves in this party in such a way as would help its reconstitution and reorganization." Although this sentence is omitted in the final draft, the conclusion is inescapable: we must not give any aid or comfort to those who are fighting to continue the existence of an opponent organization to the SWP. The "progressive aspects" of the revolt, you see, are "outweighed" by the reactionary consequences.

We must therefore, place no obstacle in the path of the Stalinist liquidationists. The tactic then is clear enough: The Trotskyists support, directly or indirectly, the Stalinist proposal to liquidate -- but with an amendment, to be sure: Instead of joining the Democratic

Party, the members of the PP are all invited to join the SWP, and this, we are informed, "is opponents work as traditionally considered"!!

In our opinion, this is pure, undiluted, classic, infantile sectarian stupidity--"as traditionally considered." The net result of this brilliant tactic -- if successful -- would be to help the Stalinists defeat the progressive revolt and liquidate the PP in a reactionary direction. It goes without saying that the progressive opponents of liquidation will answer our invitation to join the SWP with some very rude remarks, especially since they will have been thoroughly and justifiably alienated by our incomprehensible -- and reactionary -- tactics. It would be far better to abstain entirely from the conflict.

The line of the minority of the Chicago Branch Executive Committee, on the other hand, is calculated to deliver some body blows to the Stalinists and to build our "independent organization" in the process. First of all, they propose "to send some people into the PP to do opponents work" -- without equivocation or mumbo-mumbo about "subordinate" and "independent."

Second, they propose a tactic which will link us with the participants in the progressive revolt against the Stalinists and create "a center of opposition around our people and our viewpoint which would become a bridge to recruitment into our party."

The crisis and internal conflict in the PP are by no means limited to Chicago. The conflict in the New York ALP between Marcantonio and the Stalinists over the very same question, which has been brewing for more than a year, now appears to be coming to a head over the question of whether to run independent candidates in the 1953 municipal elections or to support "good government" coalition candidates.

On April 29, Marcantonio threw down the gauntlet to the Stalinists at a city-wide conference of the ALP activists. He attacked the Stalinists for proposing to "surrender the fight" and "liquidate" the party. He called for a reaffirmation of the objective of building an independent party which would give political expression to the interests of "the indigent, the poor, the Negroes, labor and farmers and for the affirmation of peace, equality and freedom" both nationally and in New York City. Concretely, he proposed that the ALP run independent candidates in the coming municipal elections. He challenged the Stalinists to settle the dispute in the primaries.

The bulk of the several hundred activists at the meeting -- most of them workers and housewives from all sections of the city -- expressed their support of his line. This policy speech was to open the debate in the branches. It is a safe assumption that this same conflict is developing in other sections of the country. Obviously all this is -- or should be -- meat and potatoes for us. Had we a year ago recognized these tendencies, adopted a tactic aimed at intervening in the unfolding crisis, we would now be in a strong position to exploit it to our advantage.

This is precisely what I proposed in the PC in January of 1952. I called attention to the developing rifts over the coalition

question and outlined a policy that would suit our purposes.

The entire approach was attacked and rejected on the most incredible doctrinaire grounds with Cannon setting the pace. The PP is a "bourgeois party"; Marcantonio could not possibly oppose coalition politics because he is a "political adventurer" from 'way back, whose "real program is his own re-election to Congress"; furthermore, he would desert to the imperialist camp at the first opportunity, just as Wallace did; we could not assign any comrades (at least not competent ones) to this work because it would interfere with our independent election campaign, etc., etc.

In the meantime, in the New York Local, the members of the Stevens-Ring faction protest indignantly that they are "not opposed" to opponents work, but take every opportunity to disparage and belittle this work, deny that any real opportunities exist, scoff at the contention that there is internal conflict -- or for that matter any life whatever -- in the ALP, and direct carping attacks against comrades engaging in this work.

To top off their scandalous factional behavior with regard to opponents work, after screaming their heads off for a written report by the opponents work director setting forth policy, the Stevens-Ring faction has tabled action on the report for two months, and has clammed up in stubborn silence in all branches in spite of constant and repeated demands for even an expression of opinion.

On this question as on every other question in dispute, the majority has no consistent line. All it has are vague doubts, suspicions, resistance and doctrinaire pronouncements.

The results are now plain for all to see. Those who see non-existent new layers of militants and "serious" labor party tendencies arising, fail to see small but real tendencies and opportunities. Their mechanical priority in the order of party work is not facilitating our work in the mass movement; it is eliminating all work in Stalinist circles. Those who proclaim themselves the "hard" and "intransigent" fighters against Stalinism let the Stalinists go scot-free when they are so vulnerable, and miss the real opportunities to build our independent party by recruiting cadre elements who resist the opportunist policies of the Stalinist leadership. The war against mythical Stalinist tendencies inside the party has become a substitute for a Bolshevik tactic of struggle against the Stalinists in the real world.

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