

ACTIVE WORKERS CONFERENCE

BULLETIN LII

← II

THE TASK BEFORE THE PARTY

Our Active Workers Conference has been called as a meeting of the militants active in the party and trade union work. Its primary purpose is a review of the practical work we have accomplished in the period since the last party convention, of the manner in which the policies of the party have been carried out, and of the experiences we have accumulated throughout the country. On the basis of such an exchange of opinion and experiences, the Conference will outline the practical tasks of the party for the coming period.

This Conference does not, therefore, have the task that usually devolves upon a party convention - the task of reviewing the international and domestic political situation and setting forth the political line of the party. Instead, it is the daily problems of the party that it must consider. It must occupy itself with such questions as these:

What have been the concrete experiences in our main field of activity, the trade unions, and what successes, failures, and difficulties do we have to record? What have been our concrete experiences in the work of recruitment to the party? What is to be learned from our progress, how are we to remedy our shortcomings and overcome our difficulties? What have been our concrete experiences in the extremely important work of integrating and activating the new members recruited to the party and, again, what successes, failures, and difficulties do we have to record? How shall we take advantage of the coming period to further the work of recruitment and of integrating the new recruits.

To discuss and decide these questions intelligently, requires an understanding of the state of the party today.

First, we have not yet succeeded in compensating for the heavy losses to the armed forces suffered by the party in the past four years. Of the ablest and best-trained forces we had when the party was founded, forces indispensable to a smooth and effective functioning of the branches and leadership, we now have at our disposal only a small section, and not of the superior elements in all cases.

Second, many of our members who received their first opportunity to enter industry only with the outbreak of the war, were unfamiliar with the highly-skilled art of functioning in the trade unions and factories as revolutionists. They were obliged to learn the art over-night, so to speak. Even those with previous experience encountered a new situation with new problems, namely, functioning in the trade-union movement under war-time conditions. If we go no further than the involuntary testimony of our enemies, it is easy to see that we have done remarkably well in the face of difficulties. But it is also a fact that much remains to be learned in this field.

Thirdly, many, if not most, of our active militants acquired their skill in the work of party recruitment in the period when the movement was preoccupied

almost exclusively with the acquisition and consolidation of its theoretical and political position, and when it was divorced, by and large, from the broad working-class movement and the actual class struggle. Recruitment was confined largely to propaganda among elements with a fairly advanced political education. To recruit among the workers with whom our militants now come into daily contact, requires methods of agitation and propaganda, and an approach, which are radically different from those to which the past accustomed us. Some of our militants have reoriented themselves accordingly. Others, as may be observed in almost every branch, have not.

Fourth, we emerged from the S.W.P. not as a clearcut, homogenous political tendency, but as a bloc of several tendencies. At its foundation, our party was more distinguished by what it had in common against another party than by what it had in common within itself. A bloc is good enough, sometimes unavoidable, sometimes highly desirable, for carrying on a fight against another political grouping. As the permanent basis for a party, which can justify its right to independent existence once only by the uniqueness and distinctiveness of its political program, a bloc is no good at all. The past five years of our party have been a period in which it has hammered out a theoretical position a political line, a conception of the revolutionary party, methods of operation, etc. which are specifically its own, which distinguish it clearly and unmistakably in the working class movement. We do not lay claim to be sure, to being a party from which nothing can be subtracted and to which nothing can or should be added. That conception we leave to the S.W.P. But we are in a position to claim that we are now a clearly delineated political tendency, with well-established positions on the main questions of the time. One of our difficulties lies in the fact that this is not fully comprehended or properly evaluated by all the party militants. Another difficulty lies in the tendency, represented by some comrades, to arrest this progressive development and to throw the party back to the stage of a loose, diffuse bloc. (In the latter case, it should be noted, the "restoration" of the bloc is, in turn, a stage on the road to re-shaping radically the theoretical, political and practical character of the party so that it is once more a distinctive political tendency -but distinctly different from what it is today.)

Despite our difficulties, handicaps and defects, from which we continue to suffer in one degree or another, our party has more than justified itself.

First, there is our contribution to the theoretical and political arsenal of Marxism. It is not necessary to repeat here, or even summarize, what has been set forth in ample detail in the article on the fifth anniversary of our party published in the New International. It is hardly necessary to emphasize here that we have succeeded in defending the new, as well as the old and unmodified, positions of our party against all critics and opponents. But it is important to record the fact that too many of our militants take this contribution too much for granted; that is, do not evaluate it at its proper worth. All things are relative. To have no reason or right to boast of a "completely finished" theory and program, or of having "settled" every problem down to the last comma and period (such a boast, if we have our senses about us, we will never have occasion to make). But whereas the rest of the Fourth International with one or two bright exceptions, was stricken with theoretical paralysis during the war, following the death of Trotsky, or floundered in self-imposed bewilderment before the new problems or the old problems in new form, our section of the movement proved capable of dealing satisfactorily with these problems.

Second, for the first time in this country, we demonstrated that the Trotskyists, previously designated as sectarians, know how to publish and disseminate a popular, mass, socialist agitational paper, in which the basic ideas of revolutionary Marxism are translated into the terms of, and related to the life and struggle of the masses of workers. The symptomatic importance of this is, in a sense, even greater than its practical importance. Our paper has been accumulating a tremendous amount of credit for our party. Not all our militants have always understood (the principle reason is indicated above in the reference to the failure of some comrades to reorient themselves in the work of recruitment) how to draw the cash on this credit, that is, how to exploit the paper for direct party recruitment. Apart from entirely legitimate criticisms of Labor Action and from proposals made to strengthen it in this or that point, this is what lies at the bottom of the not-at-all legitimate (i.e., the unwarranted, the erroneous) criticisms made of the fundamental character of the paper. The average party militant does not yet know how to utilize the openings that Labor Action gives him to the workers. It is not less true, of course, that the party Center has not supplemented the paper and the work that it does with the indispensable propagandistic material in the form of more advanced literature (leaflets, pamphlets, books) on socialism and the Workers Party program. We are, however, belatedly and at last, beginning to remedy this gross defect.

Third, we have acquired positions and influence in the trade-union movement far beyond what any of us had the right to expect, given on the one side, the comrades we had at our disposal, and the experience and ability they had at their disposal, and, on the other side, the difficulties encountered in functioning during war-time. We alone openly and actually organized the fight against the trade union bureaucrats and their masters, the bourgeois government. No one else did that but the Workers Party.

Fourth we have recruited a new type of worker-militant, and recruited many of them. In the old days, it was largely the politically-educated and trained worker or student who came to the Trotskyists on the basis of our struggle against Stalinism or Social-Democracy on the theoretical plane - more or less. Our recent recruits have come to us largely on the basis of our participation in the class struggle, on the basis of the practical demonstration of the superiority of our program, our ideas, as applied to concrete situations in which they themselves are directly involved.

The party will not, of course ever amount to anything, much less ever fulfill its historic mission, unless it recruits precisely such worker-militants by the thousands and tens of thousands. That, however, is still some way off. Right now it is already apparent that the entry into our party of this new type of militant has created special problems, many of which we never met before. The consideration and solution of these problems must occupy a large - perhaps the largest - part of our attention at the Active Workers Conference. They all boil down to the task of making our party an organization which easily recruits and easily assimilates these workers; making it an organization in which they feel at home, on the one side, but which, on the other side, is capable of developing to the full their capacity to become trained and effective revolutionists.

These new problems are familiar to most comrades. Among them are these:

The recruitment of these new worker-militants tends to divide the party into two parts: the politically better-trained members who have been in the movement for a comparatively long time, or who began their working class lives in the

political movement (as distinguished from the trade-union movement), and who are accustomed to one kind of party and working-class life; and these new comrades, accustomed to no party-life, at least not to the old "trotskyist-party life", and accustomed to a different working-class life -- one filled with entirely or substantially different problems from that of the former group (for example, "family problems," etc.)

Also: we are presented with the difficult problem of two "educational levels": for the new comrades, the teaching of the fundamentals of Marxism and revolutionary socialist politics; the old ones have "gone through all that" (some of them, to be sure, only think they have!). There is nothing some of the latter group like so much as a session devoted to the more advanced, more academic and even more abstruse problems of Marxism, which is usually conducted in a language and a jargon that leave the newcomer dumbfounded and dismayed with wonderment over whether he will ever be able to participate in such a political life as an active, equal and understanding party man. After a few such discussions in which a "smarter" comrade turns to him condescendingly with such remarks as "You know, of course, about the laws which drove to the dissolution of the slave economy in the days of the Roman Empire!" he requires great fortitude and devotion not to duck such meetings altogether or even to drop out of the party with the feeling that it is "too smart" for him, even if he is still convinced that there are not a few things about the working class and its struggles that he could teach those comrades who are so voluminously informed about the Roman Empire.

The key to the solution of these and similar problems - which are problems created by our growth, by our progressive change from an existence to which it would be fatal to return - lies in the formation and consolidation of a basic party cadre.

Naturally, if we had available all the trained, old comrades whom we have had to do without in the past few years, this would be much easier to do than it is. But even if it is harder, this is nevertheless the task we must solve first of all.

No party can hold together for long without a basic party cadre. It is the party's framework. It is the party's spinal column. It is the party's leadership in the broadest and truest sense of the word. It is what provides the party with its firmness of shape, its erectness, its driving force, its thought, its continuity, its stability. It is the only safeguard (not the program in and of itself, but the cadre which stands upon and embodies the program) against degeneration, against crackpotism, against looseness and diffusion, against panic-mongering. The basic cadre is distinguished by the following characteristics and has the following task:

It is based firmly on the fundamental program of the party, not merely on those parts of it which are held in common by another or any number of other organizations but above all on the fundamental program and traditions of our movement and on those contributions to Marxian theory and revolutionary socialist politics which have made by us collectively in the past five years of our party's existence. Only a common program can give a cadre the solidity without which it does not deserve the name, without which it cannot fulfill its task.

The elements for such a cadre exist in sufficient number in our party. Only, they have not always functioned as a firm cadre and are not fully aware of the need to function that way. They do not realize as yet the superlative theoretical and political position of our party as compared with any other. Some of them engage too readily in "straightening out the last hair" in our position. This is not

meant for a single moment to express contempt for the desire to have the party's position be as letter-perfect, as flawless, as possible. But when the "last hair" which is, presumably, not in its right place, relates to something exceedingly remote politically, or to a highly academic aspect of a political or theoretical question -- it is no doubt necessary to straighten it out, but it is even more necessary to have a sense of proportion. Those who, in disregard for the head of hair as a whole, can see nothing more important than the "last hair", may continue to devote their whole party lives to straightening it out on the grounds that unless this is done the party cannot advance an inch. We are a democratic party; there is all the necessary leeway and opportunity for them. But they will not contribute to building up and strengthening the core of the party, the firm cadre.

The party cadre, and through it the party as a whole, must be thoroughly aware that our greatest boast is not (that is, should not be) the fact that we are a democratic organization, much less that "we have all kinds of opinions" in our party. Our party is democratically organized; we are watchful for the rights of those comrades who "have all kinds of opinions". We should boast of this-- it is so rare in the labor and revolutionary movements. But our greatest boast, our greatest claim to a militant workers allegiance and affiliation, is our superlative political and theoretical position (and our record of applying it in the class struggle) which nobody else in the country has achieved.

We cannot win a worker firmly to the party (we do not deserve to do so) on the basis of the claim that, regardless of the views he may have on this or that question, or on a whole series of questions, he can always find someone in the party who shares his views, and who has equal standing with everyone and everything else. If we are to amount to anything as an effective revolutionary organization, we must recruit and train new members on the basis of the party's position, and not on the basis of offering the recruit a "choice" of any number of "attractive" and democratically-available positions.

This point is so important that every conceivable misunderstanding about it must be dispelled.

The party is in the first place an instrument in the class struggle. It is organized to advance a certain program -- not two or three or ten different programs, but one, the one it has officially adopted as its position-- in the ranks of the working class. It is organized to popularize and defend this program, to win workers to an understanding and support of it. The recruitment of workers on the basis of this program is the duty of every member. On this score, there is only one reservation. Where a party member has profound opposition to an important party policy or theory, he is, as a rule, granted permission not to appear as the party's public advocate of the policy or theory in question.

Inside the party, such a member has both the right and the opportunity to advocate a change in party policy, program or leadership. He may exercise this right wisely or unwisely, in a responsible or irresponsible manner. But nobody, let us hope, proposes to withdraw this precious (and indispensable) right from any member.

But it is precisely in connection with this right that the importance (and again, indispensability) of a firm party cadre stands out. The winning of a new recruit to the party and its program does not end with his signature to an application blank. In a most significant sense, that is only the beginning of the task.

Rare indeed is the new comrade who comes to the party equipped with a rounded understanding of its program and a confident ability to propagate and defend it. In 99 cases out of 100 (at least!) the party militant receives the greater part of his political education not prior to joining the party but after he has joined it. The propagation and defense of the party program -- against all other programs, even those championed inside the party -- does not come to an end once a worker has become a party member. It continues, even if in a different form, a different way. It is easy enough to say: Once a worker joins, the "party" should seek to educate him in the correctness of the "official line". But this is an abstraction. In this field more than in any other, the "party" is nothing (or worse: it is a bureaucratic committee divorced from the living organism) without a clear-headed, active, consistent party cadre.

The cadre is the educator, as well as the propagandist and defender of the party program, within the ranks of the party itself. It does not for a moment seek to deprive critics and opponents of the party's theoretical and political position of their right to criticize and oppose. It does, however, exercise its own good right to elucidate and support the party's position.

The cadre is not an aristocratic elite which devotes itself to condescending lectures to those who are doing the daily work of the party. It cannot be composed of the self-elevated "guardians" or drones of the party. It acquires the right to be heard, in the very first place, only by its active and responsible participation in the life and work of the party alongside of every other party member. Throughout the party, we have several old party members who are eminently qualified, by virtue of their ability and political training, to fulfill the obligation that falls to a party cadre. They disqualify themselves, however, by the fact that they engage in little or no party activity, assume little or no party responsibility, and confine themselves more or less to benevolent contemplation of the party's life. A party cadre cannot be a quiet refuge for the tired and retired. It is precisely upon the able and older party member that it makes its most rigorous demands and applies its most stringent standards. It speaks in the name and interests of the party when it applies a "double standard" in the party: demanding a minimum of activity from all members, especially the new ones, and a maximum of activity from the old members; a minimum of responsibility from the new and a maximum from the old.

The cadre is not a faction and certainly not a clique. It is not a special organization of comrades brought together for the purpose of mutual organizational advancement or protection. Being part of the cadre does not bring anyone immunity from failure to discharge party responsibilities, or special rewards for discharging them. It does not mean being either a "stooge of the leadership" or a "protoge of the leadership". It does mean being part and parcel of the leadership of the party (again, in the broadest and truest sense of the word). In a bureaucratic party, leadership is composed of a handful of the all-wise and all-powerful, resting upon a clique of sycophants and blind followers in the ranks. In a revolutionary party, the base of the leadership lies in the leaders of the local organization and is continuously connected up to the top, so that the leadership as a whole (from the branch to the center) shares the responsibilities of the party, thus avoiding both bureaucratism and dilletantism. The local leadership does not allow any center to say "Leading the party is exclusively our business." The center, in turn, allows no local leader to speak and act as if to say, "Leading the party is not my responsibility, let 'them' take that load." It does not, and is not intended to, diminish the immense importance that serious revolutionists attach to the idea of a central leadership, if it is said that the real and best leadership of the party lies in a properly functioning party cadre. In the absence of such a cadre, the party is wide open to the twin plagues of bureaucratism and dilletantism.

The cadre, as the broad leadership of the party, is conscious of the need of consolidating the party from top to bottom.

It is the most active force in organizing and carrying on the work of party recruitment. But the work of recruitment does not end when the new member joins the party. The new member must be integrated. He must be educated. We must put an end to the practice of ignoring the recruit once he has joined, of expecting him to "find his own way". In addition to formal educational activity in the branch, the party cadre must concern itself with constant personal contact and educational work with the new member. To deal with his problems formally, in the branch is important. To deal with them informally, by means of personal contact, is often far more important and fruitful. At present, the tendency is all-too-prevalent to say "Well, now that this one is recruited, he is one of us and we can turn our attentions to someone else." This is a sure way to lose members. The new recruit must be made to understand, by the most patient and persistent personal as well as formal efforts, that the aim of the party is to make all its members workingclass leaders, political leaders, and that the party seeks to equip him with the knowledge training and experience that will enable him to lead other workers - and recruit other workers. The recruitment of mere dues-paying members is a doubtful achievement.

The cadre works systematically to develop local initiative and a local responsible, collective leadership. By and large, our branches are too dependent, and in too many respects, upon the national leadership. Nothing short of a Lenin or a sort of sub-Lenin is considered satisfactory for the local (and national) leadership. The result is that in many branches, local leading comrades hesitate to take responsibility out of fear of not having the necessary ability or of being subjected to hyper-critical attacks by others (who, as a rule, refuse to take or share any responsible post). In some cases, a positively intolerable situation has been created. Comrades spend hours on end bemoaning the state of the world in general and of their branch, or their local committee, or their local organizer, in particular. They have perceived that the material now at our disposal is not ideal. They are impatient, or disdainfully tolerant, of the argument that we must build with the material we do have, that there is nothing else we can do, that it is a waste of time and energy to wail and lament until their own nerves and everyone else's are worn to a frazzle. They give no real support or collaboration to the "un-ideal" committee or organizer. They decline to take the place of the committee or organizer on the ground that they are no better qualified or that "I'm not a leader." And they cannot or do not make specific alternative proposals for the posts. They simply wail and lament the sad state of affairs. Or else they are forever seeking some miraculous formula that will cure all party ills, without ever finding one. Or, worse yet, they ignore the noteworthy progress the party has made under the known difficulties, and repeat time and again that the party is headed straight to perdition. In every problem the party encounters, tough or simple, they see all the signs of a ravaging crisis about to break over our heads. This is irresponsible, unthinking, panic-mongering, produced as a rule by the inability of some comrades to hold firmly under the strain and stresses of the past five years (mild though they have been in comparison with those endured by other sections) and under the conditions of a labor movement which has not yet matured to its basic political task. This tendency - or rather, this admixture of all sorts of negative tendencies - must be firmly counteracted by the party cadre. It must help see to it that the local committees and organizers receive the maximum of support and collaboration, not the minimum; that the irresponsible baiting of comrades who assume and discharge leading party responsibilities in the branches is not tolerated but ostracized by party opinion; that the initiative of the local organizations is not stifled by fear of errors or criticisms, but is systematically

encouraged.

The cadre cannot permit itself to be smug about its own or the party's development. It engages in the work of educating the party as a whole; but it must also educate itself. To take the position that all if for the best in the best of all possible parties, that the party's position is not only flawless and all-sufficient but applicable, as it stands, for now and forever after, means automatically to transform a living party cadre into a priesthood. The party membership as a whole, and certainly the party cadre, cannot act as the passive recipient of party policy elaborated at the top. The party membership - and especially the party cadre which must be considered as the broad party leadership - must constantly and consciously participate in the necessary modification of party policy, in the elaboration of party policy for new problems and situations, in the development and strengthening of the party's theoretical equipment. Where the discussion of the theoretical problems of Marxism takes place at the expense of the new members (as is often the case today), it should rather be conducted informally. This should not mean the erecting of an impermeable wall between the members: "simple" discussions for new members, "complex" discussions for advanced members. Every attempt should be made to raise the political and theoretical level of the new members, especially by means of the personal guidance already referred to. Only, they should not be drawn into advanced discussions artificially, by being compelled to sit and listen to the exchange of ideas which are either incomprehensible to them as yet or in which they have not yet developed any interest. It is far better that such discussions be conducted informally and that the new members be drawn into them gradually. As for general discussions on topical problems of the party and the class struggle, the older members who tend to absent themselves can very often learn a great deal from the experienced worker-militants whom we have recruited from the trade-union movement, and who rightly resent being looked upon merely as subjects for education by others, specially by those who do not have their experience in the class struggle.

A brief consideration of the perspectives of the class struggle in this country and the prospects of the party, only emphasizes the importance of developing a leading party cadre.

The re-appearance of mass unemployment, no matter how long or short its duration will bring with it a certain weakening of the trade union movement, especially of the CIO. More important is the fact that it will bring with it a weakening of pure-and-simple trade unionism. On the other hand, however, it will undoubtedly bring with it two phenomena. One: the workers will think and act more and more in terms of what "the government" should and can do, that is, in terms of political action. The field for our main political slogan, the formation of an Independent Labor Party, will grow wider and more fertile. We cannot, of course, predict the date of the formation of such a party. But if and when it is formed, we will undoubtedly participate in it. Nobody had ever denied the opportunist dangers facing a revolutionary party when it finds it necessary to participate in a reformist movement, be it the trade unions or a reformist political organization. The only safeguard against such dangers lies in firm and clear revolutionary principles and program; which is another way of saying, a firm group of revolutionists who grasp and stand upon these principles and program.

Two: in all likelihood, we shall see the re-appearance of an unemployed movement. In all likelihood, this movement, or a large section of it will be connected with the existing trade unions, especially in the case of the CIO. For most of the workers who will be in it, such a movement will represent a new social and organizational experience. In every case where a new movement has come into being among the working class (be it the formation of the AFL, the post-World-War-I Farmer-Labor Party movement, the unemployment movement of the '30's, the formation

of the CIO), a new leadership has developed from the ranks which is not wedded either to the ideas or to the ranks of the old labor bureaucracy, which is fresh, uncorrupted, militant and receptive to "radical" ideas. At all costs, we must avoid the fatal blunder made by our movement in the period of the formation of the CIO. We must from the very outset be in the new unemployed movement working in it, seeking to influence and lead it, and seeking to recruit the best militants from its ranks. There can be no question of the fruitfulness of our participation. But the indispensable condition for such participation is that all our people "stay where they are". What does this mean?

It means that all those comrades who, with the outbreak of the war, had their first opportunity to become part and parcel of the industrial working class, must remain part of that class. Unemployment will certainly affect many of our comrades. They will have to adjust themselves, in one way or another, to new and lower standards of living. But in that, they differ in no respect from the rest of the working class. Our "new" industrial workers must learn to share the fate of the class to which they belong, with which their fate is tied. The idea of being in that class in "prosperity" times and "leaving" it in time of economic adversity, must be relentlessly combatted in our party as a true-blue petty-bourgeois manifestation. A revolutionist does not go slumming in the working class. The sturdiness of our party membership, especially of the younger members, will be tested again in the coming unemployment period. Let us see to it that we do not fail in this test. Our orientation was, remains and will continue to be; to the trade unions, into the trade unions; into industry. Where our comrades are laid off in a concentration point, they must make shift in some other plant or shop until it is possible to re-enter the concentration point, or until another concentration point is decided upon. If no work is to be found for a period, then it is into the unemployed movement for our comrades - and through that movement, back into the trade unions!

The admonition against "de-industrialization" holds just as strongly for any tendency toward "de-colonization." Among our achievements, one of the proudest is represented by the work of those comrades who placed themselves at the disposal of the party to be sent into the areas deemed most profitable for party work. The bulk of these comrades, representing the best and most devoted in our ranks, are still at our disposal. Unfortunately, there is a tendency among a few to "go home." We have, in fact, already had some instances of work "in the field", where the branches are smaller than those at the center and the work in some respects is more difficult, of comrades "coming home" - some of them without bothering for official permission. Rather than tolerate such scandalous conduct, the party must be determined to carry out its decision to strengthen the branches in question by further "colonization."

Here are two tasks that must be at the center of the agitation and activity of the party cadre. No backsliding! No de-industrialization! No de-colonization! We are and we remain flesh of the flesh of the American working class--or we shall be unworthy of our good name.

The party has good prospects for growth in the period ahead. It is not important at this point to estimate or set forth figures, either as a goal or a guess. But there is no question about our prospects.

We have existed for five years, despite the gloom predictions. We have worked out our own political line; we have clarified our theoretical positions; we have forged our own type of party; we have made our distinctive mark in the organized labor movement. All this has accumulated for us a greater credit than many - even of our own comrades - think. We are in a much better position now than ever before to draw on this credit in the form of new members. This is not said merely because it is "desirable." There are concrete signs to go by.

One: we have in recent times won as sympathizers and even as members of the party a small - but highly significant - number of fairly prominent trade-union militants (as well as rank and file militants, of course). These are militants with influence and prestige of their own in the labor movement, and their adherence to our party is a tribute to it which should not be underestimated. They report an increasing interest and sympathy for our party among many of the trade-union militants and even local union officials who are, of course, not tied to the labor bureaucracy. We must not, as the late Lovestonites used to do, concentrate exclusively on winning "big-shot" union officers. However, these local union officials have a special importance for us. Due to their prestige and position (which they did not acquire by accident, but as a result of their progressiveness and militancy), they not only add to the prestige and strength of the party, but are in a position to use their influence in recruiting to the party those workers who have learned to place confidence in them. In every locality, our comrades must keep their eyes wide open for such militants, who can so easily give us access to other militants. Friendly contact with such militants must be systematically organized and systemati-

The admonition against "de-industrialization" holds just as strongly for any tendency toward "de-colonization." Among our achievements, one of the proudest is represented by the work of those comrades who placed themselves at the disposal of the party to be sent into the areas deemed most profitable for party work. The bulk of these comrades, representing the best and most devoted in our ranks, are still at our disposal. Unfortunately, there is a tendency among a few to "go home." We have, in fact, already had some instances of work "in the field", where the branches are smaller than those at the center and the work in some respects is more difficult, of comrades "coming home" - some of them without bothering for official permission. Rather than tolerate such scandalous conduct, the party must be determined to carry out its decision to strengthen the branches in question by further "colonization."

Here are two tasks that must be at the center of the agitation and activity of the party cadre. No backsliding! No de-industrialization! No de-colonization! We are and we remain flesh of the flesh of the American working class--or we shall be unworthy of our good name.

The party has good prospects for growth in the period ahead. It is not important at this point to estimate or set forth figures, either as a goal or a guess. But there is no question about our prospects.

We have existed for five years, despite the gloom predictions. We have worked out our own political line; we have clarified our theoretical positions; we have forged our own type of party; we have made our distinctive mark in the organized labor movement. All this has accumulated for us a greater credit than many - even of our own comrades - think. We are in a much better position now than ever before to draw on this credit in the form of new members. This is not said merely because it is "desirable." There are concrete signs to go by.

One: we have in recent times won as sympathizers and even as members of the party a small - but highly significant - number of fairly prominent trade-union militants (as well as rank and file militants, of course). These are militants with influence and prestige of their own in the labor movement, and their adherence to our party is a tribute to it which should not be underestimated. They report an increasing interest and sympathy for our party among many of the trade-union militants and even local union officials who are, of course, not tied to the labor bureaucracy. We must not, as the late Lovestonites used to do, concentrate exclusively on winning "big-shot" union officers. However, these local union officials have a special importance for us. Due to their prestige and position (which they did not acquire by accident, but as a result of their progressiveness and militancy), they not only add to the prestige and strength of the party, but are in a position to use their influence in recruiting to the party those workers who have learned to place confidence in them. In every locality, our comrades must keep their eyes wide open for such militants, who can so easily give us access to other militants. Friendly contact with such militants must be systematically organized and systemati-

cally pursued so that everything within our power and capacity is done to win them to party membership.

Two: a few years ago, circumstances compelled us reluctantly to dissolve our youth organization into the party. At the last meeting of the National Committee, we decided to re-commence the work of forming a youth organization. The results have been highly gratifying. We now have won to the party, or to extremely close relationship to the party, a few dozen young militants. If all goes well, the youth meeting that will supplement our Active Workers' Conference, should produce a Provisional National Committee for the organization for a definitive national youth movement associated with the party. Only those who have had the experience of functioning in a party that has a youth organization, can fully appreciate the immense value of such a group, and the great step forward its formation will signify for our party. It is not too much to say that in a relatively few months, such a movement can recruit to itself a good two hundred young workers and students, and constitute a growing reservoir of strength for the party.

Three: A sharp division is being created in the SWP. It is difficult to say at present just how it will develop. One thing is already clear, however: the minority has developed a most friendly attitude toward our party. It is already speaking in terms of unity between the SWP and the WP, an idea which is received with the greatest hostility by the Cannonite leadership. Naturally, we for our part do not exclude in advance and under all circumstances and conditions the possibility of a unification of the two Trotskyist organizations in this country. At the same time, desirable as unity is in general, we are too deeply devoted to our own principles and program and above all to our conception of a democratically-centralized (as against a bureaucratized) party, to surrender them for the sake of good fellowship. As matters stand now, we cannot, therefore, speak too optimistically about unity. A regrouping, on the other hand, if possible, even if we cannot yet speak with any exactness about the way it may take place. What we can speak about with confidence is that whatever does take place in this field in the next period will not be to the detriment of our party, its ideas and its future.

Take any of these three prospects, or all three of them together (which is what we should do), and the importance of a strong firm, unshakeable party cadre becomes ever greater.

We have a doctrine; we have a tradition; we have a program; we have worked out, after painful experience, a method of working in the class struggle, and a method of building the kind of party we believe is necessary for leading the fight for the socialist revolution. These we must maintain. They make up our party.

All that they represent—we want to impart to the worker militants whom we are winning and will continue to win to the organization. The comrades who will make up the youth organization—that training school for the party—must be imbued thoroughly with

these ideas, conceptions and traditions. In any regrouping of the Trotskyist movement that may take place presently, we will not attempt to impose our ideas mechanically upon others (that goes without saying for them, for the youth, for the trade-union militants, and for anyone else), but we must and will attempt to have our ideas prevail. How is all this to be done if not by means of a cadre, and by a tightening-up of the party which is one of the cadre's main tasks?

Our party is not a loose and indiscriminate collection of all kinds of people with all kinds of ideas and programs. If it were, it would be good for nothing but a consolidated ticket agency which offers all comers any political trip they may be interested in taking. Within certain limits, the party can have "all kinds" of people in it. It does not have to be, and it must not be, "monolithic" in the Stalinist or Zinovievist sense. Rather, it must continue to pride itself on its internal democracy and to conduct itself so that this pride is warranted. What needs to be grasped fully, however, is that our democratic practices and methods are permissible, conceivable, healthful, progressive ONLY if they are accompanied by and based upon the development of a strong, intransigent, confident cadre which stands solidly on the party's political and theoretical position. Without it, we are just a bunch of good fellows talking each other to impotence or death. With it, we are a sure-footed, effective revolutionary party, with a clear-cut right to independent political existence and a guaranteed future.

We must form and develop such a cadre. Everything else will follow from it. It is the task of the hour for the party.

M. Shachtman