

(FOR MEMBERS ONLY)

# Party

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OF THE WORKERS PARTY

## LOS ANGELES PLANS A PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By Hal Draper

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The City Committee of the Los Angeles section has developed a plan of action for the area, covering the next six months, which we feel hits the spot - for us. It is built around, or rather looks towards, the next municipal election, which occurs next April -- eight months away.

Starting now, at the beginning of August, would seem too early only if one considers an election campaign as beginning with the collection of nominating signatures, etc. This, to be sure, cannot begin till next February. But ours, as I shall explain, is in effect a plan for a pre-election campaign. We are going to utilize the next 6 months so that when the election period proper comes around, a good part of the job will already have been done; in February we can go into high gear, but not from a standstill.

A word about the character of the Los Angeles branch is necessary as background.

Unlike the San Pedro branch, which during the war was based on two industrial fractions and whose activity and life therefore revolved around industrial work, the Los Angeles branch has been rootless since before I became acquainted with it (which was 1942). For a year or so during the war it was indeed merged with the Pedro branch and really did not exist at all. About two years ago we reconstituted it, as the result of some recruitment, and during the course of the ensuing year it achieved a measure of stability. But its most important industrial elements were in the shipyards and had to function together with the Pedro comrades, so that the Los Angeles branch as such had no industrial root of its own. It led essentially an educational and propaganda-circle existence until a year ago, when we initiated and launched our campaign against Gerald Smith. This activity was in many ways a milestone in the development of the branch, but it could not, of course, solve its basic problem.

This basic problem (which of course is not peculiar to Los Angeles) can be stated as follows: rooting the branch in the life of the city, above all in the life of the working class of the city. It has another side: developing an axis of activity around which the work of the branch might revolve. For a few months, the anti-Smith campaign provided such an axis of activity to some degree, but this by its very nature was temporary and limited. From last November on, when the anti-Smith activity came to an end, the branch once more went back to "casting about" -- not exactly drifting but certainly again unmoored. At the same time, the post-war industrial demobilization hit our members with unemployment.

At the city convention which we held immediately after the return of the delegates from the National Convention, the keynote was the basic solution to this basic problem: getting our members back into industry, getting them into industrial concentrations. This is the permanent axis of activity for a branch of a revolutionary workers party, but it is likely to be slowed up by a number of problems we

face. Meanwhile, however, the pre-election campaign has an important role to play, not only for the sake of its own recruiting possibilities, but also as a framework of activity around which the work of the branch can be integrated.

### The Municipal Election Set-Up

We considered at first participating in the congressional election this fall, but the ante is too high for us at present. We would need to gather more signatures in one congressional district than the New York party needed to get a mayoralty candidate on the ballot, with all New York to collect signatures from - and we would have fewer days to do it in, not to speak of fewer forces to do it with. This was obviously out for 1946.

Municipal elections here take place in the spring. Next spring the City Council of 15 is to be elected (no election for mayor). There are two requirements for getting on the ballot: (1) a nominating petition with 500 signatures minimum and 1,000 maximum -- remarkably low; and (2) a filing fee of \$144 -- remarkably high -- which is not returned. Without discussing details about either for the moment, we feel we will be able to fulfill both by next February.

Out of the 15 councilmanic districts in the city, one is automatically picked for us by the requirements for candidate eligibility. There is no choice for us. But by good fortune this one turns out to be the one out of the 15 which we might well have selected anyway if we had a free field. It contains within it two important Negro districts. It is of course true that a white candidate in such a district is not what we would prefer, but we have no choice in that matter either. The break could have been a lot worse.

The work that is cut out for us, then, is a concentration upon these Negro neighborhoods. Such neighborhood concentration is facilitated by two things: (1) It gives us an election campaign district of restricted scope and area, rather than one spread over a wide extent, as a mayoralty campaign would have done. It is not a bigger bite than we can chew. This is important, since if the mayor were up for election we would have been at least tempted to jump into the contest, with a thousand consequent difficulties in which we might well founder. This election campaign is cut more to our size. It will permit of sufficient concentration so that the election campaign can be planned also as a recruiting campaign directly, rather than one of merely diffuse propaganda. (2) We have quite a number of contacts and many LABOR ACTION subscribers in this district now. We start with a certain base; the job will be to enlarge it.

Finally, municipal elections in this city are officially non-partisan (as in Detroit). In April the primary election is held, and the two candidates getting the highest vote are run off in the general election in May, unless one candidate gets an absolute majority of the votes cast, in which case no run-off is necessary. This set-up means in the first place that the old argument "I won't waste my vote on a minority candidate with no chance of election" doesn't hold; to what extent individual voters may realize this fact is another matter. In the second place, the "non-partisan" character of the election means in practice that only the name of

the candidate appears on the ballot -- no party designation, no symbol, etc. While one's election propaganda can be party propaganda, as everywhere else, it does mean that the voter has to go by the name of the candidate. Under this set-up it is more important than usual for us not only to publicize the party but at the same time to popularize the candidate's name.

### The Pre-Election Campaign

The main job in the period from now to February, when the election period proper opens, will be: (1) to publicize the name of the party and of the candidate as widely as possible in the district, so that they will be at least known when the election period opens; and (2) to build up our list of contacts and subscribers in this district to the maximum extent - say, several hundred.

Weapon No. 1 in this drive is LABOR ACTION. It would of course have been necessary for the branch to conduct regular sub drives for the new LABOR ACTION anyway. This permits us to gear this sub work into the framework of our overall plan, while at the same time the election campaign itself will be an almost automatic follow-up on the subs. The sub drives will be held in this district. If in the next six months we get, say, 300 subs in the district, it does not of course mean that we automatically have 300 votes sewed up. It does mean, however, that we have 300 definite people, with names and addresses, to hammer away at, instead of relying only on diffusely broadcast propaganda. For comparative purposes I might mention that when the SWP ran their candidate last year as "the Trotskyist candidate for the Mayor of Los Angeles," she got some 500-odd votes over the entire city.

Such a bloc of LABOR ACTION subscribers would also greatly simplify the work of securing the nominating petition. Low as the number required is (we will aim at submitting 1,000), it would still be a strain on our forces for a while. But not only will practically every LABOR ACTION reader be a petition signer, but I think we can expect to find at least a dozen who will be willing to circulate the petition themselves.

In general, during this period, our aim will also be to cull out of the list of contacts and subs a smaller list of those who will be willing to do work for our campaign. There will be many things that such volunteers will be able to do. For once, we will be able to do more than merely propagandize our contacts about socialism or agitate them about capitalism; we will be able not only to show them that we are doing something, but also to involve the best of them in action with us. If the campaign has any recruiting possibilities, and it has, it will show up here.

Such a sub drive can be organized in two ways: (1) general branch mobilization in a given area - Red Sunday style; and (2) assign to each comrade, or to teams of two, a square block or blocks which he is responsible for covering at any times convenient. Both might well be done, for maximum coverage. Such a sub mobilization may be preceded by one free distribution of the paper with a propaganda leaflet attached.

By February, then, we should have a sizable number of people in the district who have in one way or another expressed an interest in our ideas. The Labor Action sub route is not the only way. We plan to have a second arm to this campaign. That is a local pamphlet.

By the end of this month we will have written a pamphlet on "Jim Crow in Los Angeles - How to Fight It." There is no doubt that it will sell like hot cakes. It will serve not only to introduce the party in the best possible way in the circumstances but also to introduce our candidate as the author. Its sales will serve to tap other sources besides those available through the sub mobilization route. It can serve as an introduction to Negro groups and organizations in the locality as nothing else could do. Our publication of the pamphlet on Gerald Smith heightened the party's prestige considerably; this should do at least as much. Even in street sales or sales at meetings, there are means of getting the names and addresses of interested people - namely, by pushing a topical petition at the same time, for signatures. It will help in getting speaking dates at neighborhood organizations for our candidate during the election period.

Our intention is not to make it directly an election pamphlet -- we will be selling it before the election period, and we want to continue to use it after the election, without it being outdated. But it will present a program for the fight against Jim Crow in the city which will also be a part of our election program; and during the election period, it can be supplemented by inserts to point it directly toward the councilmanic vote. Here again I believe we can utilize contacts and sympathizers in the district to spread the pamphlet for us - its topical and local appeal will be sufficient for that purpose. The Negro people of Los Angeles, well aware of the race problem here, are like everybody else interested in that which touches them most immediately and at home, and a pamphlet specifically on race discrimination in their own city will have twice the appeal even of a general national pamphlet on the Negro problem. Not only do we not have the latter anyway, but in any case they would not conflict.

We are asking the national office of the party to run this pamphlet in LABOR ACTION first, partly to cut costs and also to aid in our sub drive for the paper. While it would have to be initially financed by a loan, there is no doubt that in the course of six months at the outside it will more than pay for itself.

The utilization of LABOR ACTION and the new pamphlet will do the main job in this pre-election period. There are other lines along which we are thinking but which cannot yet be blueprinted. There is a large organization of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP). We are getting acquainted with it and will work along with it. Opportunities may turn up through this channel. The same goes for other local Negro groups which we will be looking into. Especially in a couple of months, after our pamphlet is published, we will consider holding public meetings in the area. We may be able to organize existing contacts into a sort of campaign club for the purposes of the election proper. The nature of the campaign opens up other tentative possibilities

which may or may not prove realistic; we will see as we go along.

Between now and February, also, will have to take place the research and investigation necessary for the preparation of a good election program. We will also have to investigate the present incumbent in office, who was a lily-white candidate. We will also want to find out as much in advance as possible whether there will be any independent Negro candidate running, especially one sponsored by the Stalinists; this is a possibility, but naturally it will not be known long before filing time next spring.

Our plan has all the earmarks of being able to sweep the comrades into the spirit of the campaign as it progresses, lift them to the occasion, and be organizationally and politically fruitful. Taking all its aspects and possibilities, it is somewhat beyond the reach of our present forces, WITHOUT, however, being beyond the reach of what we CAN do, given the will and the devotion and the energy which we must demand. Everybody without exception has a job to do.

August 7, 1946.

By Paul Picquet

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Almost every issue of LABOR ACTION carries a lead article which would have excellent value as an agitational leaflet on the most important issue of the day in American political life. (A good example is the statement of the National Committee entitled "Our Answer to Bevin's Speech," on page 1 of the June 24, 1946, LABOR ACTION. This statement, reprinted as a leaflet, would have been eminently suitable for widespread distribution, especially in Jewish neighborhoods. Similarly, the various lead articles on the OPA-price crisis.)

With the coming of the eight-page LABOR ACTION it will be more difficult than with the old four-pager to have any great amount of mass trade union and neighborhood distributions on any continuous basis. Also, for certain mass distributions leaflets have a value greater than LABOR ACTION - for while the leaflet compels attention to focus on the one question dealt with in the leaflet, LABOR ACTION offers a dozen or more competing bids to the attention of the reader.

### Proposal

I would propose that the National Office work out a method of providing leaflets to the branches on the key questions of the day, along the following lines:

1. When LABOR ACTION has a lead article which would be particularly appropriate as a leaflet, then the editors should have the printer save the type of the article and reprint it as a leaflet for the use of the branches.

2. As soon as a decision is made to reprint the article as a leaflet, the National Office should notify all branch organizers that the leaflet will be available and instruct them to place their orders at once. (This notification can easily be made before LABOR ACTION comes out.) If a deadline is set for orders, the number of leaflets ordered can then be run off and dispatched to the branches which ordered copies.

I believe this proposal, though it sounds very complicated, would have the following advantages:

A. It would serve to provide politically competent political statements in leaflet form for the use of the branches.

B. It would aid in pointing the branches on the road to political alertness -- spur them to take advantage of the key issues of the day to build the party. Particularly would it have a value in integrating the work of the party in close cooperation with the National Office in the execution of the Party's political campaigns.

C. It should serve to expedite and cut the cost of such leaflets. When a particular branch decides to issue a leaflet, the branch must write the leaflet, raise money for printing, and get the printing done, a process which takes a great deal of time very often, and one which, because of the additional problem of great expense,

serves to reduce the production of political-agitational leaflets to a minimum too low for effective political work. Mimeographed leaflets, while suitable for announcing meetings, etc., cannot carry enough copy in small space for effective agitational messages. It would seem that the LABOR ACTION department could work out an arrangement where the use of type set up for LABOR ACTION for leaflet purposes would render the publication of such leaflets less expensive.

D. Illustrations, through the cuts which LABOR ACTION uses, can be provided. They are available for branch leaflets only at prohibitive prices and provided suitable illustrations can be procured for reproduction.

E. The issuance of leaflets on such a basis should not interfere with the use and distribution of LABOR ACTION. First, all such leaflets should be printed as reprints from LABOR ACTION and should carry an ad and sub-blank for LABOR ACTION. If LABOR ACTION is used properly in followups on neighborhood, shop and union distributions, the issuance of such agitational leaflets should serve as a basis for popularizing LABOR ACTION rather than as competition with it.

F. Space could be provided on such leaflets for local identification.

If the party can work out a basis for provision of competent political-agitational leaflets for the branches, we would be in a position to more effectively draw attention in each city to the Workers Party as the party which takes a bold and correct stand on the issues which are agitating American workers.



## ON PARTY DEMOCRACY

By Bud Haynes

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Some of the aspects of democracy in our party are very good, the critical independent thinking of the rank and file and the comparative (to the SWP) theoretical level of the party, all this has been very striking. However, there are some things that should be commented upon.

To any person who has read Ciliga's "The Russian Enigma," Kravchenko's "I Chose Freedom," and Barmine's "One Who Survived," the most striking feature one notes is the lack of influence the party membership had on the leadership - the bureaucracy. The lack of consideration of the needs, wishes and welfare of the rank and file, especially of people who differed from the line, is characteristic of most leaderships. This is not an amalgam to show that the same thing exists in our party. Not even a tendency or germ exists, to my knowledge. However, some of the people in the party are quick to use parliamentary methods to limit debate or discussion, sometimes on important questions. And, more significant, they offer these motions after having presented their own point of view without limitation! One comrade who did this, when derided about it, said, "It is necessary to teach them to speak concisely."

One would have to be concise indeed, with a two-minute time limitation. Comrades, this is fantastic; we weep, wail and gnash our teeth at the debacle in Russia and we can't even afford to listen to all points of view on a subject no matter how boring or repetitious they may be. This is a form of intellectual superciliousness and snobbery. The correct inference to this is - no speaker has anything to offer that you don't already know - therefore, why let them speak? It must be properly considered that this is demoralizing to the education of the newer comrades.

Our problem is to encourage and teach them to speak - not to limit discussion. Also, some of the comrades are very prone to formalism - and attempt to make rules for every occasion and allow no deviations therefrom. This leads to rigidity and inflexibility, which sacrifices the free discussion of the ranks to formal rules. Obey the rules even if by so doing the party is weakened or nothing is accomplished? Or people are lost from the movement?

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(NOTE: Apparently, the foregoing article is prompted by a specific local occasion. We are in no position to comment on the occasion but would like to call to the attention of the writer the following: Limitations of time for discussion are not necessarily signs of "bureaucracy." As a matter of fact, where branches are large and there are a number of new comrades, a time limit on discussion is really democratic because it affords the largest number of comrades an opportunity to discuss and prevents older comrades, leaders, etc. from using up all discussion time. If the time limit only serves to prevent a solution of a problem, naturally, it must be modified; however, should the lack of a time limit mean that the regular business

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of the organization could not be handled by the branch but must be referred to other bodies for decision and action, that would certainly facilitate the development of a bureaucracy. - Editor.)

ON ORGANIZING OUR FINANCIAL RELATIONS  
WITH SYMPATHIZERS

By Paul Picquet

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Proposal:

That the National Office begin now the practice of sending prominent members of the party through the country on fund-raising tours for the most extensive development of our relations with sympathizers who are contributors, or possible contributors, to the party.

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The party has never been very efficient in its development of the possibilities of financial aid from sympathizers to the movement. During the past period some locals have begun to pay attention to this necessary task in a somewhat organized manner, as has been the case in Chicago.

However, there is a limit to which local efforts can go. It is a fact that sympathizers to the movement, by and large, can be gotten to give more when approached by someone prominent in our movement, someone whose articles they have read or who they have heard speak. Also, when approached by one who is connected with the movement in a "national" sense they are apt to feel more the importance of their interest and their contributions.

If such national tours are made, they will have to be made regularly. The first would possibly no more than pay for itself, but it would lay the basis for more profitable tours later, because of the contacts developed by the tourer working with the local branch in each city.

Such fund-raising tours should be planned long in advance, and the branches should have explained to them the purpose of the tour and instructions as to the general method of procedure in preparing for the tour. Each branch should make what seems to it the best arrangements for the tourer to meet prospective contributors, starting with those sympathizers who have been contributing to the branch on the solicitation of the local members. In some cases a meeting in a member's home, the sympathizer and the party representative on tour, in another case a small social gathering, etc. - the branch will be able to figure out how best to utilize the National Office representative. Then, the branches should analyze the NEW INTERNATIONAL and LABOR ACTION sub lists and the mailing lists of the branch for names which indicate that their owners are professional people, or people of some means (e.g., names of doctors, addresses in well-to-do or college neighborhoods, etc.) and prepare to have these people seen, first by a local member on a general political basis, and then, if the branch thinks it might be productive, by the National Office representative when he comes to town.

The above are only indications of what the branches could do. Other means can be worked out. The main thing is to utilize the

efforts of the local and national organizations in close cooperation in this task. As for how the proceeds from such a cooperative venture are to be worked out as between allocation of funds to National Office and local, the present arrangement seems adequate.

There is no reason why fund-raising tours cannot be combined with speaking and organizational tours. The point is that we begin to allot sufficient time in each tour, for each city, so that the National Office representative will be able adequately to handle the work of seeing sympathizers and making financial contacts. It would seem an excellent idea if fund-raising tours could be worked out in conjunction with particular party political campaigns. This would provide a concrete basis for approach.

## THE READING BRANCH

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One of the goals set forth in the National Program of Action calls for the activation of a regular branch of the Workers Party in Reading. The comrades will see from the article which follows this introduction, that this goal has already been realized.

Shortly after the appearance of the Program of Action, in compliance with a request of the Reading comrades, I visited Reading. A meeting had been arranged for Party members, close contacts and sympathizers. I was very favorably impressed by the comrades and contacts present. All but one of those present were industrial workers. All were serious and obviously determined to form a branch and to continue their work in Reading as a branch. Subsequent to the meeting, two of the contacts joined the Party.

In the name of the National Committee, I greet the Reading branch of the Workers Party.

Nathan Gould  
Director of Organization.

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### REPORT ON THE READING BRANCH

By Vincent Pottinato

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The Reading group has established itself as a branch of the Workers Party. It consists of six members, five of whom are workers in the same steel fabricating shop and one a self-employed cabinet-maker.

During the course of our activity we have surrounded ourselves with a group of sympathizers, contacts and well-wishers on a modest scale. Most of these are in Local X, USA-CIO, although we have connections in several other locals, including other steel locals. That this circle of influence actually exists can be proven by the REGULAR renewals of LABOR ACTION by these people and also by the literature sales for which we have a fairly consistent and regular market.

The aim of any branch is to assure itself of the prospect of consistent and regular growth, even if on a very modest scale. The indispensable basis for this is an active periphery. The main problem of the Reading branch is to develop, by means of well-rounded activity, the present circle of casual friends into a staunch periphery, a periphery upon which we can rely to consistently and regularly attend all of our functions, classes, socials, etc., and, so far as trade union work is concerned, a periphery that will lend us more consistent and regular support on trade-union policy and activity. I say that this is an urgent problem of the Reading

branch, specifically, because the impression I gather is that this elementary problem is solved in most branches, except that the further problem is to continue to extend the periphery field. In Reading it is a question of establishing an active relation between the branch and our casual friends.

The reason that the Reading branch has not succeeded in establishing this kind of relationship, as yet, rests mainly upon some elementary errors - so elementary, in fact, that it took us three years to learn what these errors are. This was also another factor over which we had no control. This, however, I shall take up last. This factor has to do with the SP in Reading.

The first error was a too general approach to our contacts. The second error was a lack of consistency in our attempt to establish a regular forum group with these contacts. I shall elaborate these two points before going on to other errors committed.

By a too general approach I mean that when we called some of our contacts together we did not have a specific purpose for a group meeting. We would say, "How about coming down to such and such an address, we want to discuss problems of the trade union movement and organize a progressive group." As a result there was no real, concrete and immediate goal for the meeting in the sense of trying to get over a few points. We tried to deal with too many things, and it turned out that we actually did not get across any point. The discussions did not lead to a specific conclusion. What was necessary was that we should have proceeded by announcing a specific topic, say, "Why we need a Labor Party," and arranging to have one of us speak on it at some length; have a discussion, and then plan another topic for another evening. Actually what occurred was: We invited a number of persons to a discussion, with no specific topic (except, usually, the grandiose scheme of organizing a Progressive Group without previous educational work). When the attendance was very small, instead of holding a serious and interesting discussion with the people at hand, we usually became depressed, etc., because every one who promised to attend did not and nothing was accomplished. After proceeding to conduct a few sessions along this line, we would drop the entire matter for a long time, and then lickety-split call another meeting to organize a Progressive Group, with the same experiences and results. To sum up, the first set of errors we committed was that we sought to establish a Progressive Group first, without exploring the ground through the means of regular, consistently held discussion groups with a specific topic and depending upon a smaller attendance at first, rather than starting off with a bang with a large attendance. In part, this distorted activity was a result of our attempting to force the development in Local X because of the real possibilities that existed and still do. Our attempt was doomed because, although the situation was and still is very favorable for us, we are not yet prepared to dominate the situation.

The second problem of the Reading branch is the improvement of our trade union methods. As can be seen by the figures of the branch membership, party activity at present is practically synonymous with trade union activity. It is necessary to introduce in this field a more careful and systematic planning of the work of the Party members

in the union. In the past this activity was carried out haphazardly, sloppily and without well thought out plans and campaigns. Also, there was a tendency to pay too much attention to parliamentary matters, a field in which none of us are particularly expert. If we can really put our forces to work in Local X, along the lines of efficiency and planned activity and with the emphasis on AGITATION, we can make real headway in the coming period.

The reasons why these things were not put into effect in the past can be elaborated upon:

1. All, except one of the workers in the shop, are new members of the Party. The oldest of the new members (old in terms of membership) has been in the Party for two years. The others have been in one year or less. This posed the question of these newer comrades learning during the course of time how to work as revolutionists in the trade unions; that is, the methods and organizational techniques, the purpose and aims and goals of our work. It was not only a question of the newer comrade agreeing abstractly. IT WAS A QUESTION OF THESE COMRADES LEARNING HOW TO THINK AND ACT AS REVOLUTIONISTS IN EVERY SPECIFIC QUESTION AND SITUATION. This comes only over a period of time. However, I think that we have reached the point where the accumulated experiences and errors of the past period have developed all of the comrades to a point that will make it possible for us to pitch into the work in the coming period with increased vigor and a full use of the power that a really organized fraction can achieve when it operates along the lines of plan, well thought out strategy, etc. In this fashion we can make every person really count.

2. The biggest error we made in this work, and this is partially or perhaps entirely responsible for not making greater advances, was to subordinate our independent activity to maintain a loose bloc with the leadership of the local, predominately SP. We did this because Local X was conducting a really progressive struggle against the International, particularly during the recent steel strike. The program was fundamentally our ideas. We more or less handed the defense of this progressive program over to the established leadership. As a result, although our ideas were adopted by the Local, we were not recognized as the real authors of these ideas. The workers, as a whole, were still supporting the elected officers. Not only that, but the leading SP'er in the local deliberately refused to initiate an organized Progressive Group. Since he dominated the officers, he was able to keep his fingers on the reins. The reason why he refused to organize a Progressive Group is obviously because we would have more weight inside such a group than we would on the union floor. Such a group would have been more political and we could have introduced some of the objections we did have to the activity of the leadership - mainly errors in strategy, etc. On the floor, the SP'er could easily risk his prestige (he was the first president of the local, having initiated the organizing drive; we really started to operate only within the last year and a half) against us. Besides we had committed ourselves to not raising these issues on the floor.

Actually, however, there was little independent opposition we could offer because what differences did exist were secondary, at

that time, and the potential differences were only in the infancy stage.

But we have released ourselves from this smothering relationship. Since the SPers refuse to organize a Progressive Group, we intend to intervene actively in the life of the local with our own independent program on the basis of the procedure outlined under point 1 of this discussion. One of the main questions we will intervene on is the price crisis. The Reading CIO failed to take any action on this question. The leadership of Local X are completely at sea on the question. The SPer himself was utterly devoid of any ideas on the question. Through our motion a committee of 12 workers, 6 of whom are the Local's delegation to the CIO Council, was elected to establish a program for the Local for which it will fight and campaign among the unions in Reading. We should be able to register some success in this.

3. The third problem is to bring the Party out into public life. For example, if by working along the lines I have indicated, we experience a regular, although modest, increase in membership, there is absolutely no reason why the Reading branch couldn't undertake to run an election campaign next year. Here the problem is mainly the responsibility of the older members in the Party - that is, a hesitancy and reluctance to develop themselves as Party spokesmen before the public. The first step in this direction is to stop leaning upon out of town speakers before we organize a public meeting. It is necessary for the Reading branch to develop active spokesmen who can handle situations that call for immediate meetings, etc. This is the responsibility, primarily, of the more experienced members of the Party. Once this has been attained, we can constantly shove ourselves forward as a Party that is beginning to respond to all developments and offers concrete and practical suggestions for action to the workers. Besides, we will be able to offer more to the National Office than what we receive - a necessary relationship.

By seriously trying to work along the lines that have been indicated, I think that the Reading branch has every reason to expect a healthy development in the coming period. If we fail, the fault will be in us and not the situation.



ON VETERANS WORK

(NOTE: The following letters are published upon the request of the National Veterans Committee.)

\* \* \*

Chicago, Ill.  
July 18, 1946.

Dear Comrade Gould:

Your letter of the 10th was read to the vets meeting and we all seem to realize the importance of what must be done. We meet regularly after the round of our respective chapters have met and hear reports from each one. The first steps of integration in the chapters are taking place; a little faster in some, a little slower in others.

M. has been chosen as a delegate from his chapter to a conference of organizations engaged in protest and defense of a Negro woman whose home was bombed as a result of Jim Crow terrorism and to which the WP also has representatives. He is also on the education committee. In another chapter we have two people who will be working with H. who agreed to help us out. H. was a delegate to the convention and is a bit of a wheel in the organization. Our two people have attended a couple of meetings and are just feeling their way around. In still another chapter where we discovered an old-timer, F., we have two people who went there for the first time. There is another chapter in the Mexican neighborhood that is a chapter in name only as it has not been functioning at all. The president of the chapter is a contact of a comrade of ours who is also Mexican and we plan on reviving the chapter as soon as the president returns to town. We have been laying the groundwork for said revival by J. and myself who will be working in this chapter visiting those people who had been members or expressed willingness to be members. This may turn out to be our most fruitful undertaking as the field for work in the Mexican neighborhood is unlimited and by our entering in this way may pave the way for the party to launch into neighborhood work. At the same time we have no illusions as to the tremendous task and obstacles that loom up generally. As this chapter will be our own baby and we are starting from scratch and none of us are too experienced in this particular form of work, any aid from you in the line of suggestions, ideas, directives, etc. will be tremendously appreciated. The Stalinists have made an attempt to revive this chapter but not without success. Having the inside track we ought to do the trick. As soon as the Stalinists find it going they will, of course, attempt to flood it. By that time we needn't worry. Right now the problem is to keep them from finding out I am in there.

I am going to visit the contacts who have indicated willingness to work with us on vets work and ask them to join still another chapter where the possibilities of exerting some good anti-Stalinist influence are many.

As you know, we have laid down a two-fold orientation for our-

selves locally. One is general political influence, pushing the organization in a militant, progressive direction; the other is to concentrate on personal contact work. I feel the latter is the most important and have constantly stressed it to the boys. One does not preclude the other but rather complements the other. What do you say?

I spoke with H. and although he is friendly and agreed to help where he can, he considers himself independent politically and my personal impression was that he wasn't over-enthusiastic about us coming in and didn't seem to appreciate the idea of political influence being so necessary.

The Springfield affair you ask about was really nothing much or I would have written it up for LABOR ACTION. The Chicago Labor Veterans Council which functions out of the Industrial Union Council (led by Stalinists who split from the regular Chicago Industrial Union Council to form their own) is completely and thoroughly Stalinist. They called for a UAW motor caravan to Springfield on a housing protest. O. and I were selected to go from our union along with a couple of other guys. The Stalinists did a bum job on it and it was a bit of a fiasco, having been able to drum up only four cars from Chicago, including the one from our local. The governor was in good health.

We have a friend who is vet representative on the regular CIO council which at present is doing absolutely nothing on vets and we have in mind trying to do something along this line, but it may be a long term perspective for we must first get our local to set up a regular vets committee with us on it and then proceed from there.

Our student vets are exclusively newer people whom we feel we should not press too strongly with our industrial orientation. The rest are either in or trying to get into industry. The contacts are either students or white collar with the exception of one who is a union organizer.

Information of vets activity of our other branches would be heartily welcome. Perhaps a bulletin exchanging our experiences and methods would be of some value. And again I ask that if there are any ideas, suggestions, etc. you have for our work, please let us know right away.

Do you receive all the vet publications? I am going to try to get the comrades to follow as many of them as they can.

Fraternally,

R. Sherman

Detroit, Mich.  
July 24, 1946.

Dear Comrade Gould:

A few words to bring you up to date on vet activities here during the last few weeks:

You know, probably, that a special session of the legislature was called last week to decide on the question of a State bonus. All UAW locals were asked by the International to send vet representatives to the State capital to testify on the bonus. Just previous to this the vets committee of our local held a meeting at which B. was elected vice-chairman (the chairman went on a two months vacation; B. could have been elected chairman in his absence but we decided to wait until the latter returned). Also B., I and a leading Reutherite were elected to represent our local in a forthcoming State conference of UAW vets. B. made the motion broad enough so that this same committee of three would represent the local on the bonus question.

So that when this special session came up, the three of us were sent. Our position was for the bonus, of course, but not at the cost of a sales tax. There were about 75 union vets there and all who were permitted to testify made it abundantly clear that the UAW position was that the bonus should be paid by taxes on corporation war profits and on high incomes. It was voted finally to submit the question to a vote in the November elections in the form of an amendment to the State constitution. The amendment will say simply: Should a bonus be paid? The question of its financing will be left to future legislatures to decide. An attempt was made to get us to agree to accepting part of the sales tax already in effect (3%) to pay for the bonus, but this was of course rejected.

This was really the first attempt of B. and me to meet the active vets of the other locals and though it is really too early to say anything definitive, our prospects seem very good for future work. We made many good contacts and are looking forward to this State conference, the date for which has not yet been set. There were some Stalinists, but apparently not too many. And we did meet many excellent genuine militants. The only Cannonite was J. who was placid and reserved but not unfriendly toward us.

And we are beginning at long last to get into other vet organizations. I've joined the VFW and S. and B. are joining the AVC this week. We decided to form an AVC chapter in our plant of which S. will be organizer.

The UAW has published a veterans manual recently. Let me know if you don't have a copy and I'll get one for you at once.

Jake is now formally in charge of our branch vets work and you will be hearing from him. But we will all write to you on our activities. I will write soon on the VFW here and on my work in it. I think it would be a good idea particularly if we got an idea of our vets work in the other branches.

Fraternally,  
Oscar

San Francisco, Calif.  
August 7, 1946.

Dear Comrades:

I have been elected corresponding secretary for the vets fraction in this branch, and here is the first report to be submitted. First I shall quote some notes by Comrade Scott Byers:

"Together with an SWP'er whom I believe to be a minorityite, four of us all joined a new chapter of AVC. The SWP'er and the four of us have already constituted ourselves a caucus in this chapter.

"The SWP'er is an old timer who came from the SP and at the height of Minneapolis teamster militancy had organized another union of teamsters in Kentucky. He was business agent and was responsible for his union adopting program identical to the Minneapolis teamsters.

"The new chapter was formed within a housing project of 800 units, but the chapter's jurisdiction is not limited to the project. The project is the only one in the entire Bay Area which does not segregate races. Approximately 50% of the people in the project are Negroes, 45% white, 5% Neisi.

"Scott lives three blocks from the project and has three contacts in the village at this date.

"At the second meeting of the chapter Scott gave an astute but militant speech on OPA and a membership drive on the basis of tying in the AVC activity with local labor, especially the UAW of which he is a member. This made it possible for Orozco to nominate him for delegate to the East Bay Area Executive Council which coordinates the activities of East Bay's five chapters. Scott was elected, largely by Stalinist support.

"By having a member on the council we find ourselves able to be on the inside track on many things we would otherwise have to wait until individual chapter meetings for. By having Scott sit on the council we have learned, so far as it is possible to tell at this point, that: the Stalinists are nowhere in control of the leadership of any one chapter; only two Stalinists are seated on the council, and one of their opportunist sympathizers; that the Berkeley #1 chapter leads the field at this point setting most precedents.

"The Berkeley #1 is led by two pink liberals. This has approximately 240 members, comprising half of the East Bay membership. The latest development is that the wives of vets in #1 have organized refusing to be called an auxiliary (they demand to be considered associates), attending all meetings, taking part on all committees, especially local affairs. They do not, however, have a

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\*This is known as "Cordonices Village", a point of concentration for the Stalinists of the East Bay.

vote. We in #2 are going to adopt similar activities as soon as is possible.

"The housing project offers exceptional basis for WP activity as well as AVC work. The lack of Jim Crow has already done much of the spade work. 90% of the Negroes were placed in the project by the Mare Island Navy Yard which reserved the houses for their workers. One month ago Mare laid off 20,000 Negroes so that today almost all the Cordones Negroes are either unemployed or on compensation.

"...One of the members (in this chapter) is a seaman who will soon ship, another a student who has very little time and the other two are GM workers who have even less time."

The last paragraph refers, of course, to members of this chapter who are comrades. At the present we have besides this, two members in the Berkeley #1 chapter, in which the Stalinists are even stronger than in #2 (they raffled off "The Great Conspiracy" last meeting!!!). We expect to have one or two others in soon.

Comradely yours,

Peter Marlow  
San Francisco Branch