

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
RESOLUTION ON THE PARTY - By National Committee	1
THE PARTY DUES SYSTEM - By David Corbin	28
CONFUSION OR CLARITY - By Victor Burns	30

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RESOLUTION ON THE PARTY

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THE PRESENT CHARACTER AND ROLE OF OUR PARTY

It is necessary to state again our conception of the role of the party. It is not a question here of the nature and role of the revolutionary Marxian party in general. That is well-enough understood and unmistakable. Rather, it is a question of the nature and role of our party, in this country, in the present period. The need for a restatement arises for three reasons: First, proposals are being formulated by some comrades which involve an important change in our conception, which necessitates bringing our conception into sharper relief. Second, some of the older party members have allowed themselves, for a variety of reasons, to be disoriented from our conception without developing any clear or consistent conception of their own. Third, and most important, an increasing percentage of our membership is composed of new comrades who, because of their recent adherence to our party, were unable to participate in the elaboration, discussion and adoption of the conception which has formed the basis of our activity and perspective, and consequently do not have a thorough and systematic grasp of it.

A conception of the role (and therefore the perspective and tasks) of a revolutionary party which is to be concrete and specific (as contrasted with the conception of the role of the party in general, historically), must be based on fundamental considerations. Any conception of the party's role based upon superficial, accidental and incidental phenomena, is worthless and downright misleading. The conception which we have developed has been the result of thoroughgoing thought, the long and rich experience of the revolutionary movement throughout the world, as well as in the United States, and the concrete practical experiences which have permitted us to check our conception repeatedly in the practice of party life and of the class struggle.

Stages of Party Development

Save under the most exceptional circumstances every revolutionary organization develops through three stages or periods. These are represented in its existence as a propaganda group, an agitation-al group, an action group.

The first period corresponds to the inescapable necessity of assembling and consolidating the initial cadres of the party, its central core, around the fundamental principles and program of the party. The principal task of the organization, to which everything else is rigidly subordinated, is propaganda, that is, the putting forward and the defense of a whole series of connected ideas (the basic principles and program) to a comparatively limited group of advanced elements. Organizations which seek to skip over this stage are sure to flounder and disintegrate. There

is no other way of establishing the distinctive character of an organization, of justifying its independent existence (that is, its existence separate from all other organizations), of welding together the forces capable of eventually taking on the flesh and blood of an effective mass organization and of setting large masses into motion as a class.

The second period corresponds to the necessity of popularizing the fundamental ideas of the organization among increasingly wide sections of the working class. The principal task of the organization is agitation, that is, the putting forward of single ideas or slogans to the largest possible section of the working class. In agitation, the principles and program of the party are not put forward in the same manner as that which was calculated to establish, extend and consolidate the central party core. They are directly connected with the actual problems and struggles of the working class. They are put forward in the simplest and most popular manner. They are couched in terms which give them access to the actually existing state of mind (consciousness) of the masses and are aimed at most quickly bridging the gap between this consciousness and the objective needs not only of the masses but of society as a whole. They are put forward for the purpose of popularizing the program of the party among the working masses, of demonstrating to the masses that the party is capable not only of answering the fundamental problem of society but also of answering the immediate, daily problems which urgently face the people. They are aimed at raising the class consciousness of the proletariat and thereby making it more receptive to the idea of joining or supporting the revolutionary organization as its leader, first in the daily struggle and last in the final struggle for socialism.

The third period corresponds to the necessity of setting the masses into motion along class lines and under revolutionary leadership. Once the party has gained sufficient strength, and only then, does it possess the forces that allow it to take responsibility for calling upon workers to follow it in a class action. Once the party has gained sufficient prestige, and only then, does it have the power to have workers respond to its calls for class action. It is then that its principal task is action, that is, the mobilization of significant sections or groups of workers for class action under its leadership and behind its slogans.

There are no brick walls between any of these stages. There is no formal test to make, no graduation examinations to take, which establish when to pass from one stage to another. It is not possible to fix the "dates" a priori. It is not even possible to guarantee that the transition will always be forward, inasmuch as circumstances have more than once compelled the revolutionary organization to move backward. The art of politics (which includes the art of organization) consists in judging correctly the stage of development of the party, of testing the judgment in practice, and of changing the character of the party accordingly.

While there are no brick walls between these stages, it does not follow that they do not exist or that a revolutionary organization can pass from one to the other at will, by arbitrarily adopting a decision to that effect. These stages exist and they are distinctive. Not only that. In addition, there are (and necessarily) intermediate stages which actually mark the transition from one main period to another, and which are usually accompanied by internal crises of one degree of intensity or another. Such crises can be averted or their effects minimized not only by scrupulous attention to the objective situation, the relationship of forces and most particularly the actual stage of the party itself, but by a clear understanding of the nature of the process by which a party develops from a propaganda sect to a mass party of action.

For example: for a propagandist group to try to operate as a mass party of action, before it has firmly established its programmatic clarity and consolidate the cadres around its program, before it has popularized its program among substantial groups of workers, before it has sunk its roots in the places where the proletariat works and has its mass organizations - can result in only one of two things. The propagandist group will engage in adventurism (substituting its own ineffectual "action" for the action of the masses) or in opportunism (substituting for its revolutionary program the backward or reformist "program" of the masses).

For example: for a mass party of action to refrain from operating as one, and to confine itself to mere propaganda and agitation - can result only in the masses turning their backs to the party and in the sterilization and disintegration of the party itself. The masses have their own way of judging the character of a revolutionary leading party. If it is capable of leading them in genuine class actions but refrains from doing so, the masses look elsewhere for leadership. The party disintegrates because antipathy felt for it among the masses is communicated to those workers who belong to the party, and they too lose confidence in it.

A revolutionary party must have as its fixed objective the speediest possible evolution from the propaganda to the agitation stage, from the agitation stage to the stage of action, i. e., to the stage of a mass party. It is hardly necessary to add that the party does not cease to carry on the indispensable work of propaganda when it becomes predominantly an agitational organization.* That would seem obvious. What is necessary to emphasize is that the transition from one stage to the other cannot be made at will, or simply because the "objective political situation demands it." Any attempt to do so can end only in demoralization, disorientation or worse. Arguments for such a shift from one stage to another which are based upon its "desirability" or upon impatience, are not worthy of consideration by serious revolutionists. The world history of the revolutionary movement has amply disposed of such arguments in advance.

* (Insert: It does not cease to carry on the indispensable work of agitation and propaganda when it becomes predominantly a mass party of action.)

At What Stage of Development Does the Workers Party Find Itself?

Is the Workers Party really a party? Unless the answer to this question is an emphatic "No!" it is impossible to acquire a real understanding of our situation, therefore of our problems, therefore of the solution to our problems.

We have a Marxian conception of the party, not a petty-bourgeois conception ("any seven tailors of Tooley Street can constitute themselves a party") or a sectarian conception ("we, the vanguard of the vanguard, are the party of the proletariat").- The Marxian conception of the revolutionary party is that of a vanguard organization which is able not only to speak for the proletariat (or significant sections of it) but also to represent it and lead it in the class struggle. In a country like the United States, we cannot speak seriously of such a party until it numbers tens of thousands of members, or several thousands at the very least, and until these thousands actually have the confidence and following of many more tens of thousands. Anything short of this conception is tantamount to sectarianism or to the blind fanaticism and self-deception of Cannonism which passes for party confidence.

In calling ourselves the Workers Party, we did no more than proclaim our intention to become a party as rapidly as the situation and the exertion of our forces allowed us to become. The importance of this proclamation, must be viewed with special consideration of the fact that the American proletariat, alone in the international working class is not even organized politically as a class.

The Workers Party is a propagandist group. Yet, it is not merely a propagandist group. It is certainly not a propagandist group in the sense or in the way in which the old Trotskyist movement in this country could be given this name. However, it is not a mass party of action either. It does not, and it cannot, call any substantial section of the proletariat into class action under its leadership, and thereby take political responsibility for such a call or for what would result from such a call. It does not claim to be (it is not and cannot be) a mass party. Such a claim would, in the first place, only deceive workers to whom it appealed. The dubious "advantages" of such a deception would quickly be destroyed the moment these workers actually entered the party and found out for themselves that the organization is not a mass party and cannot expect to act as one in the present period.

Is our party an agitational group? No; in any case, it certainly is not simply an agitational group. The slightest knowledge of our party even by an outsider - to say nothing of a party member - shows that we have not quite passed beyond the stage of a propagandist group. The most accurate characterization that can be made of our party is that it is in the

intermediate stage between a propagandist and an agitational group. For this situation, there are, on the one side, profoundly important objective reasons; and on the other side, conscious purpose. Whatever steps we have taken to advance to our present stage and to maintain this advance (i.e., not substantially further, yet certainly not back to a previous position), have been taken deliberately, consciously, with purpose and understanding. What is required is a similar consciousness and understanding throughout the party, especially among our newer members and among those we shall recruit in the future.

It was stated above that it is impossible to shift from one stage to another simply because the objective political situation demands it. This statement requires two supplementations. The first is that the demands of the objective political situation cannot simply be ignored, either. The second is that the shift from a propagandist existence to an agitational existence is far more easily and "arbitrarily" made than the shift from a propaganda or agitational group to a mass party. If the second requires a one hundred horse power motor, so to speak, the first requires only a ten horse power motor or even less.

On what basis did we permit ourselves the shift into this "intermediate" stage we now occupy, the stage of a propagandist-agitational party? To say that the objective political situation made it possible or necessary, is true. Contrary to the Cannonite analysis, ours proved correct, namely, that in spite of the war situation the workers would maintain a high degree of militancy and would be receptive to the popular presentation of militant working class and revolutionary ideas. But this explanation is not sufficient; by itself, it would be deceptive.

We moved away from the purely or predominantly propagandist existence of the old Trotskyist movement (with the type of party branches, branch activities, press, public action, etc., etc., that characterized it) only and precisely because enough of us had participated in this existence. That is, our party did not start from scratch. It did not have to begin at exactly the point where, let us say, the original Communist Party began, or even (and this is a much better example), where the old Communist League of America began. We did not have to start all over again with fundamentals, even though a handful among us, who soon left us, thought so. We already had a propagandistic background. We already had a propagandistic training. We had already gone through the stage of a propaganda party. More accurately, again, enough of us had gone through this stage to permit taking a big step forward toward the "second stage." In other words, we had already assembled a party core standing upon fundamental principles, upon the basic program of the Fourth International, and which was united ideologically by them. We had a trained and educated group of Trotskyists.

We did not have to begin where the original Trotskyist

group, the CLA, did. Even before it was able to "establish" the principles of Trotskyism in this country, it first had to acquire an understanding of these very principles (that's how ignorant we were in those days). It first had to establish Trotskyism as a distinctive tendency in the working class and the labor movement. It first had to go through a long series of highly educational factional struggles against opportunism and sectarianism, which clarified its fundamental position, strengthened it, and solidified a party core within it. In the split, we not only took over all its programmatic, ideological and political acquisitions, but a sufficiently substantial party core. To put it differently the propagandist stage of the Workers Party was to a large extent already experienced, lived through, in the Socialist Workers Party and its other Trotskyist predecessors. That fact, primarily that fact, enabled us to move so speedily, almost from the first day of our existence into broad agitational work among non-party and even non-political proletarian masses.

Because we made this move not on impulse, or merely because it was "desirable to move", but consciously and understandingly, we worked out and carried out our systematic policy of colonization and industrialization. (Such a policy, as we conceived and executed it, could not have been adopted in the old CLA, for example, and, if the term is properly understood, should not have been adopted.)

Because we made this move, we did not publish our own replica of the old Socialist Appeal or the old Militant, i.e., a purely propagandist paper, but a radically different paper, Labor Action, i.e., a popular agitational paper.

Because we made this move, we sought to change the character of the branches, of the branch activities, of the approach to workers by our party members, of the emphasis in our work, of the "language" used by the movement, of the emphasis on theoretical and academic discussion, so that all of these would be more in keeping with the changing character and therefore the changed role of the party.

Why, then, are we still in a propagandist stage, that is, in the "intermediate" stage between it and that of an agitational group? For two interrelated reasons.

First, when we founded the Workers Party, we had, as indicated, a propagandist past to base ourselves on. But we did not base ourselves on this past alone - the SWP did, but not we. We did not merely form another Trotskyist organization, just like the SWP with only the difference that we wanted a "better regime." No, the difference extended to the question of program. Our party was distinguished from the "other Trotskyist party" not only in "organizational" but also in political questions. In the course of the past five years, the number of these political differences between the SWP and the WP has increased, and they range all the way from theoretical to

tactical-practical questions.

Now, whatever any one of us may think about the "gulf" separating our party from the Cannonite party, the fact remains that to the average worker and even the average radical worker the two parties look and sound and feel pretty much alike, at least at first blush. In the reaction of these workers to the two parties there is a sound kernel of truth.

Where a truly unbridgeable gulf exists between two working class organizations - let us say, between the post-war Social Democracy and the Third International - the cleavage is so clear that there is no great need on the part of either of them to write, speak and work to justify its independent existence. At most, the worker, even the militant, asks for a united front of the two parties, but not for organic unity. But, where the "gulf" looks like a "fissure", only one of two things is indicated: either the early unification of the two organizations, on the grounds of a sufficiently common body of principles; or if such unification is politically impossible, it becomes the task (and no minor one) of each of the two organizations to defeat the other politically and to do it thoroughly. It is only in the process of doing this, that the organization is able to justify its independent (i.e., separate) existence.

How is this to be done? In the concrete case (that is, given the rivalry of two tiny organizations, neither one of which has great influence or roots in the labor movement), it can be done primarily by intensive propagandist activity, that is, by the systematic presentation and defense of the theoretical and political positions of our party as against those of the rival party, by polemic and criticism. In other words, it requires an emphasis on the particular position of our own party, on those points where it differs with (and is, in our view, superior to, or correct as against) the SWP. This is demanded for two connected reasons. First, to justify the independent existence of our party in the eyes of the radical workers and thereby to facilitate their recruitment by us instead of by our rival. Second, to educate and train our party members, especially new recruits, not only in what we have in common with other radical organizations but in what we counterpose to the others.

To think that we can ignore this question, or "subordinate" it, is ridiculous. Such a notion is AWP-ism, and a crude, primitive variety of it.* It flies in the face of experience.

* The American Workers Party was formed in 1933-34 by radical activists led by A.J. Muste. Politically confused, it was nevertheless moving to the left, and it had many excellent, though unsystematized and one-sided ideas on the "Americanization" of Marxism, on the popularization of socialism, and on mass agitation and action in general. It believed, however, that the mass revolutionary party could be built in this country by "ignoring" its labor political rivals (SP, CP, CLA) by refraining from polemics and debates with them, and by simply agitating and organizing "raw militants." It could not, of course, do any such thing, nor did it. It soon fused with the Trotskyist Communist League of America. In the united Workers Party of the U.S. it speedily lost all identity as a distinctive political current.

We can afford to "ignore" or "subordinate" our theoretical differences with the Social Democratic Federation or even the Stalinist party in recruiting and keeping workers by confining ourselves exclusively or mainly to our practical work among the masses. Why? Because our practical program, our daily program in the class struggle, our practical activities, show clearly enough our differences with the Social Democrats or Stalinists. The same is not true in the case of our other rival, the Cannonites, and it is not true precisely because of the similarity (not identity, to be sure, but similarity, more or less) in our practical program, our practical daily activities. To win and keep a recruit as against the Cannonites, we should and must demonstrate the superiority of our more fundamental political positions, of our theoretical positions. To think we can "ignore" the Cannonites is as absurd as for them to think they can ignore us. We have not allowed them to ignore us! They do not allow us to ignore them. Experience shows that in nine out of ten cases of contacting and recruiting workers we come into direct conflict with the Cannonites - almost everywhere in the country. If we do not face this problem in recruiting a contact, we face it after we have him, when he is either approached by the Cannonites or acquires a perfectly legitimate and healthy curiosity and interest in them and their views.

Naturally, this does not mean for a minute that we approach a worker or recruit a contact merely or even primarily on the basis of differences between us and the Cannonites. Nothing could be more preposterous! We must continue as heretofore to win worker-recruits on the basis of our practical activities in the class struggle, on the basis of their sympathy and agreement with the fighting program of the party and Labor Action. We must under no circumstances voluntarily return to the "old days" when we concentrated our attention upon the politically advanced workers (and students, intellectuals and other petty-bourgeois elements) whom we sought to win on the basis of the fact that the theory of the permanent revolution is correct and the theory of socialism in one country is wrong. All that is being emphasized here is that we not only cannot escape from or ignore our propagandist and polemical work, but that we must still continue to give it a place of the highest importance in our party life.

There is a second reason why we did not, and cannot yet, shift fully from our propagandist character. It lies in the emphasis given above to the fact that "enough of us" had already gone through the propagandist stage to warrant an advance toward the stage of agitation. By that is meant to convey the idea that the permissibility of this advance, the assurance that it would not drown us in opportunism, lay primarily and above all in the party's leading cadre.

However, the war gravely weakened this cadre, not only in

the central leadership but in the branches. If the repeated emphasis placed on this fact is not met by some comrades with impatience or with a gesture indicating that they regard it as an "apology" (for what is not clear!) this is a bad sign. It only indicates that these comrades have not yet assimilated the key, central, fundamental significance of the trained party cadre as the indispensable spinal column, heart and mind of a revolutionary party; it only indicates that the emphasis must become more emphatic. But whether the cadre is weak or not, numerous or small, the fact remains that many, if not most of the members of the party - even at its foundation, to say nothing of the majority of the members of the party today did not pass through the propagandist stage experienced by the older party members.

Naturally, there is no arithmetical formula for the percentage that a party cadre must reach before it can "carry along" the rest of the party to a second or third stage. It is a matter of judgment, based on experience and subject to test. But it should be clear to the thoughtful members of the party that the past three, four, five years of the party's propagandistic work have not been unimportant or unnecessary. This is putting it negatively! Actually, this work has been the indispensable supplement, more accurately, the indispensable basis and preliminary condition for the excellent agitational work that has been carried on. Even now, five years after the founding of the party, this work must be carried on and even intensified.

In the first place we have scores of new workers in the party, without previous experience. They must be saturated with the general fundamental principles of Marxism and also with those Marxian principles and policies which are the unique contribution and characteristic of our party. (It goes without saying, they cannot be saturated over night, and attempts that have been made to do this were doomed to the defeat they richly deserved!) In the second place, many of our older members for one reason or another - preoccupation with practical work, trade union activities, assumption of a multiplicity of tasks due to the shortage of qualified militants, etc. - have neglected their duty of self-education and of educating others. These comrades need a "re-saturation." We aim to be a party of activists, whose members are primarily occupied with agitation and activity in the broad highways of the class struggle. But our activists must be educated and trained activists, revolutionary leaders of other workers. Without this training and education, their best efforts will not raise them above the level of mere militant trade-unionists.

Because of the sense in which we are still a propagandist group, the New International, for example, is primarily what it has been in the past few years. The weaknesses and defects of the NI are only too familiar. But, just or unjust though this or that criticism of the NI may be - and it is not the

province of this document to deal with these criticisms - it can be considered only within the framework of a correct conception of its role, as a function of the role of the party. Some comrades object to the polemical concentration against the Cannonites (i.e., because of the systematic presentation and defense of our party's theoretical and political views, and the critical annihilation of the views of our only "serious" theoretical and political rival). They reveal either that they do not grasp the task of the NI in the present period, or else that they would prefer a systematic presentation and defense of their own theoretical and political views instead of those of the party. However, the party cannot bow to this "preference" as the price of the good will of these comrades.

Can We Become A Mass Party?

It would be a first class mistake for us to contemplate a return to the existence of a propagandist group. The reasons for this have already been set forth. It would be a step backward which is warranted neither by the objective situation nor by the position and state of development of the party. We must, on the contrary, strive consciously and deliberately to advance further and further away from the purely or essentially propagandist stage. The very type of worker upon whom we are now concentrating; the very basis upon which we seek to recruit him; the very activities in which we engage - all these drive us (in a sense whether we wish to be driven or not) to become more and more a party of mass agitation, moving along the road to a party of action. We cannot and should not, say to the worker whom we have won to the party on the basis of our superior agitation and activity in the trade unions, "Now that you have joined on this basis and with these ideas, we present you with a propagandist group and nothing more." That would be absurd; more than that, there is no necessity for it whatsoever.

If there are comrades who consciously aim to return us to a propagandist group existence and nothing more, they are composed largely of those who disagree fundamentally with the "propagandist position", i.e., the theoretical and political position of our party. They want a propagandist group precisely because they want to start at the very beginning, as if we had not acquired and firmly established the theoretical and political views which distinguish our party as a clear-cut tendency in the radical and labor movements. However anxious they may be, there is no reason whatsoever for agreeing with them. Back to a propagandist group - that is a reactionary slogan in our party.

Should we "convert ourselves" into a "mass party"? Yes, we shall do so. But not by arbitrary decision. Not by any mechanical devices. Not by putting on a label which calls us that. Not by self-deception which deceives nobody else because it cannot (and should not!). We will never recruit a worker on that basis, or, if we do, we will never keep him in the party. We intend to become and act like a mass party. That is our firm aim. But that requires work; that is a struggle,

and a long and complex one; that is an aim realized at the end of a road of fusions and splits and regroupments into a big movement in which, we expect, the elements of our present party will constitute the decisive political force (provided we continue to prove worthy of such a position). Nothing can substitute for this work, this struggle and the endurance and patience and self-confidence it presupposes.

We cannot lay down a blueprint of the future development. But we can put forward a tentative, a practically-desirable perspective.

We are handicapped primarily by the fact that we do not operate within a politically-organized working class. That is point A, B, C, and all the other letters down to z.

The history of the labor movement shows that no revolutionary organization in any country ever became a genuine mass party overnight, that is, within a period of two-three-five-ten years. It can, of course, be said that the tempo of development is much more rapid nowadays than it was at the time of the birth of the organized socialist movement. Nevertheless, the basic truth remains. In our time, mass parties generally speaking came out of mass parties. That is, the revolutionary mass movements (Communist Parties) came out of already existing mass working class political movements (old Social Democratic Parties). Those that moved toward the stage of mass parties by means of individual recruitment, required years, if not decades, to reach their goal (the Communist Party in this country or in England, for example, as contrasted with the Communist Parties in Germany, Czechoslovakia, France, Norway, Italy).

In the United States (not fifty years ago and not fifty years hence, but today) the tiny revolutionary vanguard movement has an elementary need of a proletariat organized politically as a class. In the U.S. (again, today, in the present concrete situation) this means that our main political concentration, our main political slogan, the struggle to break the proletariat from bourgeois politics and to set it on the road of class politics - revolves around the fight for an independent labor party. Whether or not it will be formed, we cannot of course guarantee. Whether or not we will succeed, inside it, once it is formed, in winning large sections to the revolutionary program and leadership, and therefore to the mass revolutionary party - and when we will succeed in doing this, we cannot of course guarantee or foretell. What is decisive for us, however, is the struggle. We must continue and intensify our fight for the formation of a labor party, along with our fight for the working class to adopt our program. The formation of such a party would offer our party an exceptional and highly fruitful proletarian arena in which to advance and fight for our program, and in the course of this fight to build the genuine revolutionary party of the American proletariat.

It is only under the circumstances where we have won to

our banner and our party thousands and tens of thousands of politically conscious workers that we will be able to speak and act as the revolutionary party of the American proletariat, as a mass party of action, capable of calling real masses into action and capable, also of taking responsibility for the call and for leading the response to the call.

Under what we must consider less favorable circumstances, that is, circumstances in which the American workers do not soon form a party of their own, we must continue to concentrate, as now, upon individual recruitment, no matter how slow the process may be at first. When we have recruited a sufficiently sizable group, or fused with other groups to increase our present size by many times - it will not require a formal party decision to notify us that "we are now a mass party." That will be sufficiently and clearly indicated by the size, activities, prestige, following, support, sympathy, etc. of the party.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PARTY CADRE

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 are only now 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 have had at our disposal in the past few years 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 overnight, 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 SWP not as a clearcut, homogeneous 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 SWP. 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 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. We 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 at 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 wartime. 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 pro-

gram, 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 convention. 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 these 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.

The return of the trained, old comrades whom we have had to do without in the past few years now brings this nearer realization.

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 on those politically educated and organizationally trained comrades who make the party's interests their first and highest consideration. It consists of the ardent party patriots who defend the party and its program against its opponents and make it their first concern to inculcate in the new party recruits a like feeling of loyalty and devotion to the party and an understanding of all its ideas and programmatic concepts.

The party cadre is crystallized around the activist core of the party. But a party cadre is not simply another name for an activist core.

The party cadre is crystallized around the "ardent party patriots". But party loyalty and devotion in the last analysis can be consistent only on the basis of programmatic solidarity.

The party cadre is based firmly on the 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 been made by us collectively in the past five years of our party's existence. Only the program can give a cadre the solidity without which it does not deserve the name, without which it cannot fulfill its task.

The WP is not, nor does it intend to become, a mere federation of different tendencies. It is a democratic party but also a centralist party. It insists upon discipline and responsibility both in the leadership and in the ranks. While those in complete political agreement with the party will find it easiest to play a role as part of the party's cadre, the party demands of those in disagreement with the party on one or several questions to undertake responsibilities and play a role

in accordance with their training and development as revolutionists.

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 superior 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 ^{superior} 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 that these views have equal standing with the views of the party. 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 ^{equally} "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, and nobody must be permitted to propose this.

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, if 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 abler 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 "protege 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 attention 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 working class 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 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 is 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, especially by those who do not have their experience in the class struggle.

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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, in the coming years, 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 One 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 gloomy 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 Lovestoneites 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 systematically 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. Recently 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 should produce a 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 has been created in the SWP. It is clear that the minority has developed an increasing solidarity with our party. It has declared that in the event the SWP continues its opposition to unity, the minority will join the Workers Party. 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 optimistically about unity. A regrouping, on the other hand, is 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, unshakable 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.

CONCRETE TASKS FOR THE COMING PERIOD

1. The convention after endorsing the above presentation on the character, perspectives and tasks of the party, decides to implement them as follows:
2. The convention instructs the National Committee to carry through to the end the task of placing every qualified member in industry and the trade unions so that the party is able to carry on its main work in the ranks of the organized proletariat. The industrialization of the entire party membership from which only housewives and highly-skilled or especially placed professional workers may be exempted, is an indispensable prerequisite for the proletarianization of the party by means of recruitment to its ranks of militant workers already in industry and the union movement.
3. The convention declares that in the branch elections to

follow the convention, not less than sixty percent of the executive committees in each case shall be composed of members who are industrial workers.

4. The convention authorizes the National Committee and all branch committees to establish an obligatory minimum of activity for every single member. Trade union work carried on under party direction is to be considered party work. Those members who are unable or unwilling to carry out the minimum requirements shall be suspended. In case the suspension period shows no improvement in the record of the member, he shall be reduced to the status of a party sympathizer or else be dropped from the party rolls altogether.
5. The convention authorizes the National Committee to suspend from membership of that body any member or alternate who fails to place himself entirely at the disposal of the party in any case of the allocation of assignments or work by the National Committee.
6. For one year following the convention the branches are instructed to maintain a probationary period of not less than two months for industrial workers and not less than four months for all others who apply for party membership.
7. The convention authorizes the National Committee to continue and intensify the concentration of the party work in the main industrial area of the country, the quadrangle bounded by Detroit, Chicago, Ohio and Buffalo.
8. The convention authorizes the launching of the eight-page Labor Action, as a decisive and necessary advance in the party's work. The convention decides, however, that the expanded Labor Action, while not changing its agitational character, must devote the increase in its space to a profounder political analysis of events, to popular educational and propagandistic material, and in general to material aimed at drawing worker-readers, attracted by the transitional program of the party, closer to an understanding of the fundamental Marxist program of the party and closer to the party itself.
9. The convention authorizes the National Committee to carry to carry on the work and campaigns necessary to bring the subscription level of Labor Action to a figure of no less than 15,000 by the end of 1946.
10. The convention instructs the National Committee, through its educational and publication departments, to issue a series of books, pamphlets and outlines in which the position of the party on the basic political and programmatic questions is presented. This literature shall be especially designed to put forward and defend the points of view which distinguish the Workers Party from all other political organizations in the labor and revolutionary movements. They should serve, at one and the same time, to bring the more advanced militants into the ranks of the party, and to educate those who are al-

ready in the party to the fullest possible understanding of the program, principles and tactics of our party.

11. The convention authorizes the National Committee to continue the publication of the New International in such a manner as to serve its main purpose of being the militant protagonist and defender of the party's point of view on all political, programmatic and theoretical questions, and thereby an educator of primary importance for the party membership and the party sympathizers. The convention endorses, also, the policy of keeping the pages of the New International open to discussion of theoretical and political questions that are in controversy in the party and the revolutionary movement as a whole.

12. The convention instructs the National Committee, through its educational department, to organize a more systematic and continuous educational work in the branches of the party, so as to acquaint the new members with the fundamentals of Marxism and the party program, and to deepen the understanding of Marxism of all party members.

13. As part of this work, the convention instructs the National Committee, through its educational department, to organize, not later than the end of the year, a full-time national training school for party agitators, propagandists and organizers, the students for which are to be drawn mainly from the ranks of the industrial workers and active trade unionists in the party, with the rest being supplied from the ranks of the best militants in the youth organization.

14. The convention instructs all branches to give unstinting aid in every form to the branches of the youth organization where such have already been established, and to take the initiative in establishing such youth branches in those cities where they do not yet exist.

15. The National Office shall once more institute the practice of issuing members' books to the membership. It shall set up a system of applications and membership records and prescribe a uniform method of inducting new members.

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January 1946

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

THE PARTY DUES SYSTEM

By David Corbin

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March 1, 1946.

National Committee
Workers Party

Dear comrades:

At the meeting of the Yorkville Branch which voted favorably on the financial recommendations of the N.C., the following motion was made: "We recommend to the N.C. that the regular dues of the organization be the same for all members after the probationary period." The resolution was defeated 10 to 4. It was not introduced as a substitute or alternative for the present N.C. proposal, which the maker of the motion accepted in general as a great improvement, but rather as a necessary change for the future.

The motivation for the resolution, partially expressed at the meeting, are as follows: 25 cents weekly dues for new members for the first year is an admirable idea; namely, to remove some of the barriers - in this case financial - to party membership. Making the dues nominal will do away with an underestimated difficulty. However, officially having two standards for the payment of dues creates some new barriers and difficulties in place of the old.

(1) One least important but most obvious difficulty will be the constant bother to financial secretaries of having to know the exact date of acceptance into the party of all who have less than one year "seniority".

(2) The new comrade to the party will be constantly reminded, by the very nature of the setup (mere observation when the dues are paid), that there are those, at present the majority, who have been in the organization much longer, have a terrific head start, and who supposedly know so much more than he. This only reinforces the already existing tendency toward taking a back seat which a different lingo, set of experiences, and the real difference in educational levels have already created.

(3) The party is making this official differentiation for a reason, and the reason itself cannot be lost on the "newcomer". The effect of the emphasis on length of time in the organization, combined with the party's demonstrated difference in attitude will tend to create two classes of membership. The party will be saying, in effect, to the new member: "We, the old-timers, are hardened Bolsheviks. We

realize the importance of paying \$1.00 weekly dues, rather than a quarter. You are not quite ready for that. In time we hope that you will advance up to that point. We are giving you one year." The new member might well think that the year is given not for him to improve his financial position, but rather his faith and loyalty to the party. The net effect will be for him to consider the probationary period one year. This will be reflected in his attitude and actions.

The alternative is obviously to both make the dues nominal and the same for all past the probationary period. As to whether the dues should be 25 or 50 cents, I shall not enter into violent dispute.

Making it 25 cents will have this advantage, however: To our present membership, paying 25 cents is like paying no dues at all. They will therefore consider their pledges, made in addition to the "dues", as their contribution to the party. A comrade's "dues" payment will be identical with the amount of his pledge. This will provide a real and easy standard, as compared to a system where contributions are made over and above payment of \$1.00 dues. Even to our older members, a buck is a buck, and not to be lightly tossed off. My proposal would remove the difficulty of considering the pledge something "additional", and a decent pledge as less than an obligation.

Hoping you will take steps to remedy this condition,

Comradely yours,

DAVID CORBIN

CONFUSION OR CLARITY

By Victor Burns

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An unfortunate condition exists in our party which is pregnant with serious consequences not only to the development of clear revolutionary thinking, but with what is infinitely worse, the growth of bureaucracy and all the dangers that follow such a course.

I refer to the identification of ideas and concepts with personalities. While such identification may be in part unavoidable, and in a sense even justifiable, the over-weighting of the personality aspect can lead us into hopelessly blind alleys. The problem with which I am dealing is complicated by a tradition of such identification that has long prevailed in the Marxist movement. Lest we content ourselves with the sanctity of this tradition, let us note that Stalinism, Cannonism, and, in my opinion, a whole series of potential personality-isms, did and can occur within this framework. The negative effects of this process need not be expounded here.

The Friday night debacle on the Negro question was my first experience with a serious clash of opinions in the party that was officially brought before the membership for "clarification." I am told that similar events occurred in the past. In both formal and informal discussions I have listened to some of the membership indulge in such forms of gcuging, backbiting and hitting below the belt, all perpetrated in the glorious cause of "clarification". On this score our leadership sets us none too good an example.

I could quote a whole series of not only personalized attacks on the part of both contestants, but also what appeared to be the setting up of deliberate confusions in their efforts to win support for their own ideas. It seemed as if both Johnson and Coolidge, consciously or otherwise, would have sacrificed combined clarity of thinking for personal ideological victory.

That by itself means that we are laboring with reduced efficiency and our thinking, and the activities which flow from it, must suffer. But there is even a greater danger.

The constant and close identity between personalities and ideas can lead to the confusion of one with the other and in the last analysis can result in a personal rather than an ideological leadership of the party. History has clearly indicated the road that such a course must take.

It is interesting to note that even in a basically organizational conflict, that is, the internal conflict of our last

City Committee, the term "Lundite" was used rather indiscriminately even over and above the objections of Lund.

Older party members may become indignant at this implied slur on the character and integrity of their thinking. But can every comrade honestly say that in reaching a decision on any problem, he was motivated completely by the concepts involved, and in no way influenced by the personalities advocating them? I realize that in the absolute sense such a separation is impossible; nevertheless, I still feel there is need and room for improvement without running into the dangers of perfectionism.

But for us newer comrades, most of whom are still floundering in a sea of but partly digested theory and facts, around us revolves the burden of not only fighting our way through the wilderness of demagogery to the essence of problems, but to voice our loud rejection of such methods of "clarification."