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## MILITARY POLICY OF THE PROLETARIAT

**Speech by James P. Cannon at Chicago  
Conference of S. W. P.**

(The following is a stenographic report of the main speech made by Comrade Cannon at the September 27-29 Plenum-Conference of the Socialist Workers Party at Chicago.)

Our first word in formally beginning our deliberations today is devoted to the memory of our greatest teacher and comrade and our most glorious martyr. It is the proposal of the National Committee that we all stand for a moment in silent tribute to the memory of Comrade Trotsky.

We meet for the first time without him. I am sure that as we stood for a silent moment one common thought weighed upon us all. We all realize most poignantly that, whether we are quite grown up to it or not, we now face the appalling responsibility of leading and organizing the world movement of proletarian emancipation without the direct aid of the one who shaped and guided our movement, who instructed us, who raised us up and made men of us and prepared us for this great mission. It is up to us now to show that we have really learned what has been taught to us so patiently and so thoroughly. It is for us to take the tools that have been placed in our hands and use them no more as apprentices but as full-fledged journeymen.

We have confidence that we can do this because we have been left the greatest heritage that any political grouping in the history of the world was ever given. Never before did the workers' vanguard have such complete and

thorough going preparation, in a theoretical and programmatic way, as we have received. Especially in the past eleven years since Comrade Trotsky was exiled from the Soviet Union, eleven years so rich in historic events, we have had from day to day and from year to year the aid of his great Marxist brain. With his aid and guidance we have unravelled the mysteries of this epoch and found in every case the strategical and tactical road that leads the proletarian movement to higher ground.

We not only have now the task of leading the movement in this country. We also have on our shoulders a great international responsibility. In the nineteenth century, nearly seventy years ago, Marx and Engels transferred the center of the First International to the United States. Their action was then, so to speak, a symbolic intimation of the future international leading role of America. By a combination of circumstances the prophetic gesture of our great masters has finally been confirmed by concrete reality. The main political center and organizational base of the Fourth International, which is destined to complete the work begun by the First International of Marx and Engels, is in truth lodged here in the United States in the custody of those comrades who are gathered here and those whom they represent in all sections of the country.

A combination of circumstances, rather than any special merit of our own, has imposed upon us this international responsibility. First of

all, we were fated to have the greatest amount of freedom for the open and legal development of our movement. While our valiant comrades in one country after another fell under the heavy blows of persecution, were stifled and repressed, we here in America have had now twelve years of uninterrupted preparatory work. We alone of practically all sections of the Fourth International were fortunate in beginning not entirely with new and inexperienced people. We carried over into the new movement of the Fourth International some substantial and experienced cadres who had been tested and who had learned in the Communist movement since 1918, and even before that. Our movement was thus prepared by its past and by these fortunate circumstances to establish an uninterrupted continuity between the movement of the present day and that which preceded it. All these things taken together have equipped and prepared us for the role which we must now play in aiding the further development of the Fourth International in all countries.

### OURS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY

This movement is primarily the creation of Comrade Trotsky. He was responsible above all others for formulating its program and assembling its cadres on an international scale. But within the last few years our party has come to the front and played an increasingly important role. More and more Comrade Trotsky came to rely on us as the strongest pillar of the Fourth International. More and more the comrades in all parts of the world came to look at the combination of Comrade Trotsky and the American section as the main guarantee of stability in the leadership of the international party. And now, after the death of Comrade Trotsky, we can be sure that the comrades in all parts of the world—in China, carrying on their work in daily danger of their lives; the comrades imprisoned and in concentration camps in Germany; in illegality in France; in England; in Australia; in South America; in the Soviet Union; everywhere—they are now looking to the American section, to the Socialist Workers Party, to grow up to the level of its historic responsibility and assure the continuous functioning and development of our international movement. That puts a still greater responsibility upon all of us.

We cannot lag any more. Everyone of us, I am sure, in the past years felt that if we erred, we had the assurance that we could be corrected by someone wiser than we. All of us, including myself, felt that if we shirked or slumped a little bit now and then, our laxity would be compensated for by the untiring energy of the Old Man. We permitted ourselves more than one luxury. That we cannot indulge ourselves any more. The burden is on our shoulders. We must carry it. We must

give the movement now more than ever in energy, in discipline in faithfulness and in efficient work.

We meet at a time of a great change in the world. Before our eyes, almost without our realizing it, there has been brought about a profoundly new world situation. A new period has opened up. The essence of the new situation is that capitalism in its unprecedented decay, in its death agony, has passed over completely from the relative stability and relative peace which characterized it as a growing and healthy social system into a state of permanent crisis, and the permanent crisis is now expressed in permanent war.

At the mass meeting last night I mentioned the new and significant development of the German-Italian-Japanese pact. The announcement of this pact signifies above all other things that the war in Europe is due for an extension into Asia, Africa and into the Western Hemisphere of the Americas. There is no prospect whatever for any more considerable periods of peace in the capitalist world. Just conjecture for a moment that some kind of peace could be effected in the European war. Nobody could believe that this would be a peace of any stability. It would only be a preparation for a new war of continents, of hemispheres, embracing the whole world. If a sudden, smashing victory of Hitler should enforce a peace with England, as was the case with France, no one would believe this would be the end of the war. If a formal peace should be declared and there should be a lull, during which there should be no war, it would only be an interlude.

We are preparing—our imperialist masters are preparing—night and day to challenge Hitler for world domination. And Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese imperialists are preparing to meet that challenge. The outcome can only be a whole epoch of uninterrupted militarism and war. The proletariat, which is the sole power capable of lifting humanity out of this bloody morass, must face this fact. It cannot indulge in any more day-dreams about the peaceful solution of the social problem. The workers' movement was dominated by this illusion for decades, for generations. It was thought and felt that day by day work of organizing trade unions, building reformist parties, casting votes, gaining some social legislation,—it was felt that along these lines, working from year to year and from decade to decade, they could gradually improve the conditions of the masses and glide over peacefully, without violent collisions or shocks, into a new social order called socialism.

### MILITARY MEANS ARE NOW DECISIVE

The workers can indulge in no such day-dreams any longer because the world is on fire with war and militarism. The one big con-

clusion the proletarian vanguard must draw is this: All great questions will be decided by military means. This was the great conclusion insisted upon by Comrade Trotsky in his last few months of life. In his letters, in his articles and in conversations he repeated this thesis over and over again. These are new times. The characteristic feature of our epoch is unceasing war and universal militarism. That imposes on us as the first task, the task which dominates and shapes all others, the adoption of a military policy, an attitude of the proletarian party towards the solution of social problems during a time of universal militarism and war.

The prospects of the United States remaining at peace are absolutely zero. You have before you the draft of our resolution on military policy. It has been printed in the internal bulletin and discussed in the branches for the past two months. We have elaborated in this resolution our conception of these new problems and tasks. In the very beginning we take up the question of America's participation in the war. It is completely absurd to imagine that there is some special policy—some legerdemain—that can make it possible for the strongest imperialist power in the world to escape participation in the struggle for the imperialist domination of the world. Nobody believes in this possibility except a few muddle-headed pacifists. And when I say muddle-headed pacifists I do not mean the bourgeois isolationists. I mean the fools, the people who belong completely to yesterday, like the Thomasite socialists, the Lovestoneites, the few religious fanatics.

That wing of the American bourgeoisie going by the name of isolationist are no less aggressive, no less military minded, than the wing which wants intervention right now in the present war.

The *Chicago Tribune* strongly criticizes the Roosevelt policy only because they have a different approach to the war. They think we should begin the struggle, the struggle of American imperialism for world domination, by conquering first the Western Hemisphere and proceeding next to the East by way of a war against Japan, postponing the clash with Hitler till a later time. The more farsighted, the more conscious and, I am sure, the strongest section of the American bourgeoisie, who are called interventionists, believe that we must begin the struggle for world dominion by intervention in the European war. What divides the two camps at this time is only a matter of strategy. Now that they are confronted by an open military alliance of Germany and Japan their differences can easily be reconciled.

The only question will be how soon and at what point to begin open intervention. As a matter of fact, in all except the formalities of the situation, we are intervening in the European war now as much as we can. We are send-

ing unlimited supplies of military materials to Europe. In my opinion the only reason we are not sending troops is that there isn't any place to land them. The Wall Street heroes and their political lackeys overslept the European situation. They underestimated the rottenness and weakness of the bourgeois democracies of Europe on the one hand, and the military strength of Hitler on the other. They waited too long, until the ports were occupied by the fascists. Nothing remains now but England. England has no room for troops, and there is a growing opinion among American capitalists and military experts that England itself is a lost cause.

When American participation in the war finally begins is only a secondary question. The very fact that we have appropriated approximately fifteen billion dollars in one year for military expenditures before any war was formally started; that we have instituted peacetime conscription for the first time in history—these facts can only indicate that the masters of this country are preparing for an explosion of military aggressiveness on a scale never seen in history before. Imperialist America is out to dominate the world. In its path stands Hitler Germany in the West. In its path stands imperialist Japan in the East. The conflict between these imperialist powers can in no case be resolved by diplomacy or good wishes or half measures, but only as all other things are decided in this epoch—by military force.

Now, confronted with these facts of universal militarism and permanent war, that the biggest industry of all now is going to be war, the army and preparation of things for the army—confronted with these facts, what shall the revolutionary party do? Shall we stand aside and simply say we don't agree with the war, it is not our affair? No, we can't do that. We do not approve of capitalist exploitation in the factories. We do not approve of this whole system of exploitation whereby private individuals can take possession of the means of production and enslave the masses. We are against that, but as long as we are not strong enough to put an end to capitalist exploitation in the factories, we adapt ourselves to reality. We don't abstain and go on individual strikes and separate ourselves from the working class. We go into the factories and try by working with the class to influence its development. We go with the workers and share all their experiences and try to influence them in a revolutionary direction.

The same logic applies to war. The great majority of the young generation will be dragged into the war. The great majority of these young workers will think at first that they are doing a good thing. For a revolutionary party to stand by and say, "We can tolerate exploitation in the factories, but not military exploitation,"—that is to be completely illogical. To isolate ourselves from the mass of the prole-

tariat which will be in the war is to lose all possibility to influence them.

We have got to be good soldiers. Our people must take upon themselves the task of defending the interests of the proletariat in the army in the same way as we try to protect their interests in the factory. As long as we can't take the factories away from the bosses we fight to improve the conditions there. Similarly, in the army. Adapting ourselves to the fact that the proletariat of this country is going to be the proletariat in arms we say, "Very well, Mr. Capitalist, you have decided it so and we were not strong enough to prevent it. Your war is not our war, but as long as the mass of the proletariat goes with it, we will go too. We will raise our own independent program in the army, in the military forces, in the same way as we raise it in the factories."

We say it is a good thing for the workers now to be trained in the use of arms. We are, in fact, in favor of compulsory military training of the proletariat. We are in favor of every union going on record for this idea. We want the proletariat to be well trained and equipped to play the military game. The only thing we object to is the leadership of a class that we don't trust. We don't want stool-pigeons of the boss as officers in our unions. Just as we don't want them as officers of our unions so we don't want them in the military forces. We are willing to fight Hitler. No worker wants to see that gang of fascist barbarians over-run this country or any country. But we want to fight fascism under a leadership that we can trust. We want our own officers—those who have shown themselves most devoted to their class, who have shown themselves to be the bravest and most loyal men on the picket line, those who are interested in the welfare of their fellow workers. These are precisely the type of people we want as officers. In the period when the whole working class youth is mobilized for war, those are the ones we want at the head of our battalions.

So we simply make our independent demands upon the government. We will join the war as long as the workers do. We will say frankly to the workers in the unions and shops: "We would like to throw over this whole business of capitalist exploitation—military as well as industrial—right now. But as long as you are not ready for that logical solution we will join with you, fight by your side, try to protect the men from useless waste of lives. All that we will do, but we retain one privilege—the right to express our opinion day in and day out: that you must not trust the leadership of your enemy class. Don't forget that the government in Washington is a concentrated representative of the same bosses that you have to fight every day in order to live. It is nothing but the Executive Committee of all bosses who, together and individually, act as the exploiters and oppressors of the working class. Put no

more trust in that bosses' government than you do in the individual bosses at home.

We will fight all the time for the idea that the workers should have officers of their own choosing. That this great sum of money that is being appropriated out of the public treasury should be allocated in part to the trade unions for the setting up of their own military training camps under officers of their own selection; that we go into battle with the consciousness that the officer leading us is a man of our own flesh and blood who is not going to waste our lives, who is going to be true and loyal and who will represent our interests. And in that way, in the course of the development of the war, we will build up in the army a great class conscious movement of workers with arms in their hands who will be absolutely invincible. Neither the German Hitler nor any other Hitler will be able to conquer them.

We will never let anything happen as it did in France. These commanding officers from top to bottom turned out to be nothing but traitors and cowards crawling on their knees before Hitler, leaving the workers absolutely helpless. They were far more concerned to save a part of their property than to fight the fascist invader. The myth about the war of "democracy against fascism" was exploded most shamefully and disgracefully. We must shout at the top of our voices that this is precisely what that gang in Washington will do because they are made of the same stuff as the French, Belgian and Norwegian bourgeoisie. The French example is the great warning that officers from the class of bourgeois democrats can lead the workers only to useless slaughter, defeat and betrayal.

### THE ONLY ROAD TO THE WORKERS

The workers themselves must take charge of this fight against Hitler and anybody else who tries to invade their rights. That is the whole principle of the new policy that has been elaborated for us by Comrade Trotsky. The great difference between this and the socialist military policy in the past is that it is an extension of the old policy, and adaptation of old principles to new conditions. In our conversations with Comrade Trotsky he said he considered the great danger to our movement is pacifism. The taint of pacifism in our movement is in part due to the left socialist tradition of anti-militarism. In part it is also a hang-over from the past of our own movement. We said and those before us said that capitalism had outlived its usefulness. World economy is ready for socialism. But when the world war started in 1914 none of the parties had the idea that on the agenda stood the struggle for power. The stand of the best of them was essentially a protest against the war.

It did not occur even to the best Marxists that the time had come when the power must be seized by the workers in order to save

civilization from degeneration. Even Lenin did not visualize the victory of the proletarian revolution as the immediate outcome of the war. Just a short time before the outbreak of the February revolution in Russia, Lenin wrote in Switzerland that his generation would most probably not see the socialist revolution. Even Lenin had postponed the revolution to the future, to a later decade. And a few months later it exploited in all its power in Russia. Acute revolutionary situations developed in one European country after another.

Trotsky pointed out to us that even such valiant and honest anti-war fighters as Debs and others like him conducted a fight against the war as a protest, but never once did it occur to them that the war was directly posing the question of the struggle for power. This protest against the war had a semi-pacifist character. Our movement was affected by this, especially when it was afflicted with the petty bourgeois element in the party. You can recall that when we were discussing and arguing with them, the prevailing tendency among them was expressed about as follows: "We want to know, how can we keep out of the war, if the war starts how can we keep out of military service." They were primarily concerned about the various ways of evading the draft. More than one expressed the idea of escape to Mexico.

A group of heroic minorityite students in Chicago bought a small boat and sailed for Tahiti or some such place to hide out there until the war would be over. While millions of young proletarian youth are on the battle fields getting all kinds of experiences, facing all kinds of dangers, becoming hardened and ready for anything, these heroes will be basking in tropical sunshine and waiting for their day of destiny. I suppose when the time comes to make the revolution these people will probably sail back from Tahiti and say: "Here we are boys, ready to lead you." It is not difficult to imagine the answer they will get from the boys who have already selected their leaders in the test of blood and fire.

Only those who go through hell with the soldiers will ever get close to their hearts and be able to influence them. All those with experience in the labor movement know it takes more than fancy speeches to gain influence with the workers. You must be with the workers. And nine time out of ten, I think every trade unionist will testify, the best asset you can have is to be a good worker in the shop. If the workers say, "He is the best mechanic among us; he does his full share of the work, not because he loves his boss but because he doesn't want to load the work on his fellow workers, etc."—if the workers say that about a man his influence is transferred over into the union, and when he gets up to say a word on the union floor he is listened to.

Absolutely the same psychology will prevail in the army. A man scared, ready to run—he

will never be able to lead the worker-soldiers by making a few speeches from his retreat. It is necessary to go with the workers through all their experiences, through all the dangers, through the war. Out of the war will come the revolution, not otherwise. The War Manifesto of the Fourth International declares: We didn't want the war—we are not in favor of the war—but we are not afraid of the war. In this very war we will hammer out the cadres of revolutionary soldiers who will lead the struggle.

We must remember all the time that the workers of this epoch are not only workers; they are soldiers. These armies are no longer selected individuals, they are whole masses of the young proletarian youth who have been shifted from exploitation in the factories to exploitation in the military machine. They will be imbued by the psychology of the proletariat from which they came. But they will have guns in their hand and they will learn how to shoot them. They will gain confidence in themselves. They will be fired with the conviction that the only man who counts in this time of history is the man who has a gun in his hand and knows how to use it.

The great advantage of the workers is their mass strength. "Ye are many, they are few", said the poet Shelley. All the oppressed masses need is the will to power. All that is necessary to transform this madhouse of capitalism into a world of socialism is for the mass of the workers and the poor farmers to get the one simple general idea in their heads that they have the power and it is time now to use it. The capitalist class puts arms in the hands of the working class. That will, in the end, prove their undoing.

Now war, as I remarked in my speech last night, destroys a lot of things that are useful and valuable. It is a terrible overhead cost humanity has to pay for the delay in instituting socialism after capitalism has outlived its usefulness. This delay of the revolution has visited a terrible plague upon mankind that is going to destroy not thousands but millions of human lives. It will destroy great accumulations of material culture that took decades of human labor to create. As one small illustration take the city of London today. Here is a great city with centuries of accumulated achievements of mankind being pounded to dust. Nineteen consecutive days of bombing, and it stands to reason that the city is already partially in ruins.

The war destroys a great many things which will take much labor to replace. But war destroys some bad things also. War puts an end to all ambiguity and poses every question point-blank. There might have been room in the past for doubt as to how the workers can best solve the social problem. There were whole generations of workers deluded with the idea that the best way was the gradual

peaceful, inch by inch trade union and parliamentary struggle. By that method they built up great trade unions and political parties with millions of members and tens of millions of votes. These organizations looked very imposing in times of peace. They were very important. But what happened to them, to these organizations, that hadn't learned how to do anything but pay dues one day and vote the next day? The moment they got one violent military blow they were simply finished. They were designed for peace, not for war.

How can anyone respect reformist parliamentarians and vulgar trade unionists after what happened in Belgium, Norway and France? Millions of people organized, the whole proletariat virtually organized; paying their dues; contracts signed with the bosses; all equipped with full staffs of well-paid officials and business agents in the unions; many of the officers of long standing, substantial people in the community both physically and socially; everything going fine until the situation changed from peace, which is outlived and outmoded, to war which is the logic of the present day. All these organizations for peace were crushed like egg shells. Nothing of organization remains but the small body of revolutionary people who realized that war was on the agenda and prepared themselves to function accordingly. There is nothing left of the Jouhaux unions in France. Of all his contracts, his business agents, his treasury and his pseudo-importance—nothing is left. One decree of a decrepit General Petain, "We don't want these unions any more," and the game was up.

And that great socialist party of Leon Blum, the party that mobilized millions of votes and looked so big in times of peace. The war struck one paralyzing blow, and the French Socialist Party went down and out like a sledged ox in a slaughter house. Leon Blum winds up under arrest at Vichy practically like a vagrant picked up on the street and thrown into jail. They are finished people these reformists, men of the past. Now times call out for new men and a new type of party, a party built for war.

They used to make fun of the Fourth International—this little group talking about war and revolution, which looked so insignificant beside their numerically imposing organizations. They boasted of their own importance when their movements were already marked for ignominious death. The Fourth Internationalists, on the other hand, had an idea which contemplated the coming events and they prepared to survive them. I have the great pleasure to report to you that we have received word from our comrades in France—we were all greatly disturbed about the fate of our comrades—we received word that they survived the war up to now, that our comrades had slipped through the nets and were not only safe but

were functioning in little groups and in contact with each other. Even those in jail during the war, made their way out at the time when everyone was running, including the jailors. They took advantage of the general exodus and mixed themselves with it and are still there. I am sure the same thing is true in other countries. Those who prepare in their own minds for the war are best qualified to survive and grow stronger. The Philistines used to sneer: "The Trotskyites—there are only a few hundred of them," True, but they still exist, more confident than ever. Leon Blum could not today rally together a few hundred social democrats in the whole of the occupied and unoccupied territories of France. They were not organized for war. That is why they succumbed to the first blow. Only those parties adapted for war, ready to carry things through to the very end, to a military solution of the problem, —only they will be able to survive and conquer.

### THE FUTURE OF THE TRADE UNIONS

Now I come to another phase of this problem —the transformation of this society from a peace to a permanent war basis as it affects the trade union movement. One thing is absolutely clear: The days of the old routine reformist trade unions are numbered. They will not be able to survive the war as independent organizations. The trade union movement will be able to survive only insofar as it takes the road of resolute struggle against the capitalist system. The traditional non-fighting trade union in the United States will suffer the same fate as those in France, Belgium and Norway, unless the revolutionary elements are able to vitalize them from within and inspire them with a spirit of revolutionary struggle.

And similarly the work of our own comrades in these unions has to undergo a change. We ourselves have been affected by the whole general perspective of long years of slow progress. Ninety per cent of our trade union activity in the past had to do with little agreements and combinations with progressive and non-progressive elements in order to gain a few inches in the economic struggle. We have to continue the struggle for immediate demands in the trade unions. It is necessary to continue all the patient day to day work, to guard every gain, watch every contact. In this work we collaborate with everybody—whether progressive or reactionary—in the daily interests of the workers.

But at the same time we have to realize, and make the workers realize increasingly, that there is not going to be the possibility in America for a long period of growth and stability of conservative trade unions. Such visions of the trade union bureaucrats represent a mirage. They are thinking in terms of the world of yesterday. America is going into the war with express train speed. The unions will be con-

fronted with this alternative—they will either turn sharply, develop a revolutionary policy, begin a struggle for power hand in hand with the revolutionary wing of the army, or they will cease to exist. At best they will be relegated to mere appendages of the government, having no independent power. It is in this tone that we must speak louder in the unions and in the factories.

### **We Must Tighten Our Own Ranks**

We have to look over our own party. All those comrades of the party who are in the conservative trade unions, who have in one way or another begun to succumb to that stifling atmosphere, who have begun to develop tendencies to avoid struggle and let well enough alone—all those party comrades who are sinking into that quagmire must be pulled up short. They must be reminded that the one most important thing in this epoch is to build a revolutionary party. Only a revolutionary party can inspire the unions to meet the test of the new times. We have to insist more than ever upon the party responsibility of every comrade.

Your strength in the unions is the strength of your party. Don't forget it. All these collaborators of the day; all these trade union militants who look so good in normal, peaceful times, who are good enough for a local strike but have no general concepts—how quickly these people can be transformed under the pressure of the social crisis. Only those will be able to stand up in the coming period who are fortified by great general ideas—not otherwise. You will have some bad disappointments if you believe for one moment that a man who has not yet broken his allegiance to capitalism in general will be able to stand up under the pressure of war. Not at all. Some of our comrades have already had some very painful experiences along this line. Those people can stand up under pressure who have anticipated pressure and can see beyond it to the goal of the new society.

Above all, we have to develop our party as a party of a new type. All the old party organizations were built for peace. They can't survive in this new epoch of universal militarism. The only party that can survive is the one that adapts itself to universal militarism and aims at the struggle for power. It can't be a sprawling, slow-moving, undisciplined organization. It must be highly centralized, with iron discipline in its ranks. It must be able to function, if necessary, under all kinds of persecution. It needs a strong leadership. We have to select out of the ranks tested and trusted people for leading positions and give them full authority. Only so will we be able to move fast and strike hard as a united, disciplined organization.

During the past year we made gains of historic significance. While Comrade Trotsky was still alive to help us we had the possibility of fighting out in our ranks a fundamental struggle which prepared us to build the party of a new

type. We had people who set up a great howl about "bureaucratism." They wanted a party where one could do as he pleased; have the honor and badge of the Fourth International without any personal responsibility. And if the party at any time demanded anything of them, they raised a hue and cry about the injustices they were suffering. When these milk-sops cried about "bureaucratism" they really meant to protest against centralism and discipline. I thought many times, and I said many times to comrades, that the grievance the real proletarian revolutionists in the party held against us was that the accusations of the petty-bourgeois minority were not even half true.

The workers in the party want discipline. They want centralization. They want a party that doesn't permit anybody to make a fool of it. They want a party that demands of every leader that he put his whole life, his whole time, including his personal life, at the disposal of the party. Our movement is not playing for fun. It aims to take power in this country. For that we need a hard party, a firm party. It is a great advantage for us that we got rid of this petty-bourgeois opposition. We improved the composition of our party; we got rid of a lot of windbagism. We got rid of a lot of deadwood and are now in a position to take some real steps forward.

It is time now to bring the struggle with the petty-bourgeois faction to a definitive conclusion. You know the minority refused to accept the decisions of the convention. In order to be perfectly fair and give them time to think it over we allowed them a period of nearly six months of suspension, not expulsion, to accept the decisions of the convention majority and restore their party standing. They haven't availed themselves of this exceptional concession. In the meantime they have developed politically far away from us as a typical left-Socialist, pacifist clique. Their ideological leader, Burnham, has renounced socialism. We haven't anything in common with them politically. They have more than used up the credit balance of probation we allowed them. We don't want any ambiguity and confusion in the public mind regarding them and us as two wings of the same movement. It is the unanimous recommendation of the National Committee that the suspension of the convention minority be changed to unconditional expulsion at this conference.

### **A Warning Against Supercaution**

Our second recommendation is that we begin a closer checking up of party responsibility, discipline and loyalty without permitting any panic in the ranks. We have two things to fear now, and we must steer a course between them. One is carelessness and irresponsibility, and the other is super-caution, a spy hunt and general jitteriness in the organization. The second is by far the greater danger. We are

proposing a measure that will tend to eliminate both of them. I have talked about a party that says it will stop at nothing short of the struggle for power and will fight to the end to overthrow capitalism. Such a party cannot exist with a leadership that is scared for itself or afflicted with nervousness of any kind.

We are under great pressure and will be under still greater pressure. We know that we are dealing with a murderous machine in Stalin's GPU. We know that Comrade Trotsky was not the first, and probably will not be the last, victim of this murder machine. Our party must also expect persecutions from the Wall Street government. Realizing all this, some comrades have wondered if we couldn't do something to preserve our leaders from danger—perhaps put them on ice, I suppose. From the very first hour since the assassination of Trotsky we have conducted a resolute struggle against this psychology. Scared people are not going to be able to lead anybody. One who takes part in the revolutionary movement by that fact has to encounter certain risks. Millions of young American workers are going to be thrown into the war. Many of them will lose their lives. These are dangerous times. But they are dangerous for everybody, not only for us. Revolutionists must face the hazards of our time, and not fear them. A good one-half or three-fourths of the objective of persecutions and assassinations is to terrorize others. Nobody can terrorize us. We will try to be careful, but not afraid.

I had an interesting talk with Comrade Dobbs about these two dangers of nervousness and carelessness. He agreed with me that jitteriness is worse than carelessness. "A careless man," he said, "is good as long as he lasts, but a jittery man is no good at any time." That is profoundly true. We must use the necessary caution and save ourselves as much as possible. But if you create an impression in front of the workers that you fear the hazards of the struggle you can never lead them. You can do without a lot of things in a revolutionary party but you can't get along without courage.

Now then, on the other hand, we have to check up on carelessness. We want to know who is who in the party. We don't want to have any universal spy hunts because that is worse than the disease it tries to cure. Comrade Trotsky said many times that mutual suspicion among comrades can greatly demoralize a movement. On the other hand, there is a certain carelessness in the movement as a hang-over from the past. We haven't probed deeply enough into the past of people even in leading positions—where they came from, how they live, whom they are married to, etc. Whenever in the past such questions—elementary for a revolutionary organization—were raised, the petty bourgeois opposition would cry, "My God, you are invading the private lives of comrades!" Yes, that is precisely what we

were doing, or, more correctly, threatening to do—nothing ever came of it in the past. If we had checked up on such matters little more carefully we might have prevented some bad things in the days gone by.

We are proposing that we set up a control commission in the party. We are fully ready for that now. This will be a body of responsible and authoritative comrades who will take things in hand and carry every investigation to a conclusion one way or the other. This will do away with indiscriminate suspicions on the one side and undue laxity on the other. The net result can only be to reassure the party and strengthen its vigilance. We think the whole party now, with the petty-bourgeois riff-raff out of our way, is ready for the appointment of such a body.

We have to strengthen our professional staff. We don't pretend to be a party of glorified rank and filers. The only reason we haven't got ten, twenty, thirty, or forty more people devoting their whole time, their whole energy, to the party is that we lack the resources for it. We need more money to engage more functionaries full time. This conference has to decide how big a forward step in this direction it feels able to take. We are not coming here with a proposal for specific quotas. We want each delegation to confer and decide what they can raise in, say, two months' time. Our general plan is that, as several branches have suggested, we raise a "Trotsky Memorial Fund" to build the party. We think it is a good plan. If it meets with the approval of the conference we can adopt a resolution to that effect.

We want to build the party henceforth in a more balanced way than in the past. In the past we gave an inordinate amount of our resources to the press. We had to do that. Propaganda had to go ahead of organization and prepare the way for it. In the next period we want to bend the stick a little for organization on the general principle of dollar for dollar—one for press and one for organization.

Since the last convention we have taken certain steps in this direction. You comrades in the auto field know we maintained qualified comrades in the field continuously. The same is true in other fields. The important step taken in St. Paul will have a national meaning for all of us. It shows the growing tendency of serious comrades to regard the party as the most important thing of all. I refer to the action of Comrade Carlson in resigning her civil service job and accepting a post as party organizer. This is a good example. We should raise as much money as possible to put to work for the party on a full-time basis a great number of qualified party workers. It is appalling how many capable people we have who devote only a small portion of their time to the party because the necessary job of making a living takes so much of their time and energy. That is all right for the old party, but not for us.