
Criticism About the Practical Activities of the Party

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According to the custom in the Communist movement, the Central Executive Committee of our party has started before the convention a general discussion on party questions and the tasks confronting the party. This discussion has two purposes. First, to [direct] the attention of the membership to their own party, and, second, to have the membership express their wishes and their criticism on the activities of the party and its units.

Before all, the fact must be established that the party has in every way made progress during the year. Its membership has increased, the circulation of party papers has grown, and the importance of the whole party is bigger. One of the reasons for this progress is the fact that the party is now the only representative of a clear-cut class struggle among the labor organizations of this country. As a consequence of this fact alone the WP has the best opportunities to become a large political mass organization. However, such organizations are not built in a day, especially not on American soil. All the traditional obstacles that a strictly revolutionary movement meets in this country must be understood and correctly estimated, while on the other hand, [despite] the most ardent enthusiasm and optimism, the infant age of our movement and party must be taken into consideration. The WP has not yet acquired the experience which is an important condition of progress and which will be gained through practical work.

Let us go straight to the point. Aside from this general progress, our party activities still manifest some weaknesses owing to the young age of the WP. The coming party convention will have to pay attention to

this in order to find the remedies. It is clear that not all the party units, nor the membership as a whole, are the proved and enthusiastic Communists that they should be. Our whole movement is still in its propaganda phase and the activities confronting it do not harden the membership, nor do they show the same sacrificing enthusiasm as in those other countries where conditions make it possible. Owing to this, many members take their party duties very lightly, having little regard for the common will — a centralized party. In this respect, taking into consideration the situation [in which we find ourselves], real Communistic responsibility can be developed only through suitable educational work.

But our party has weaknesses of another kind, too. The higher units of the party and the leadership need in many respects to be remedied. The whole history of the American Communist movement shows that it has suffered from the weakness of its leaders, splits, inner struggles, and factional politics, which have not always been directed towards the common good.

We recently published a report of the latest grouping and policies of the CEC. We declared outright: we were angered at this unceasing splitting and grouping of the CEC and also at the production of theses before every convention.

The existence of these different factions in the CEC does not show up only before conventions. Also between conventions the quarrel goes on among the membership. Some person or group, interested in a “new policy,” drafts his theses and starts the quarrel, and soon the fight is in full swing. Then again “the situation is changed” and it is necessary to explain it.

The CEC of the party must do something other than draft theses; it must do something other than split hairs on question that only will be important after a decade. Its members must stop factional politics, the basis of which many times may only be the question of who will become a member of the next CEC. The playing of politics for the sake of politics should be stopped.

There is a difference of opinion on the question as to what relation we should stand towards a farmer-labor party. It is permissible to disagree on a clear question like this. We believe that at the present time there has been no need to draft different sets of theses. The minority says that even they do not see the possibility for the formation of a big farmer-labor party at the present time, but that they wish to carry on propaganda work according to some features of the united front. The majority also advocates propaganda work among poor farmers and farm workers and in this respect they are compelled to work sometimes and in certain districts according to the tactics of the united front. The majority repudiates the slogan "For the Farmer-Labor Party" because the latter has thoroughly merged into the LaFollette movement. The majority claims that the last named movement will represent the same as the "radical" governments in the European countries. It may be so, but it may be different too. It is wrong to compare thoughtlessly the political movements of this country, such as the LaFollette movement, with certain movements of European countries that have history, political experience, and the development of decades behind them. We should not depend too much on predictions and presumptions, because these may collapse. Still less should we build party tactics according to these lines. We remember very well how Comrade Pepper in his flaming articles when McAdoo was exposed in the oil scandals, [declared] that only a "miracle" could prevent the creation of a third party. According to this prediction — which was alone a miracle — the boasting and noisy campaign was started for building up a farmer-labor party, a campaign which ate up energy and funds. This campaign lasted over 2 years, but suddenly a meeting of officials was called and all the previously accomplished organizing work was repudiated and our own candidates put into the electoral field. After all this, we get theses and statements in which the idea about the creation of a farmer-labor party is still more fun-

damentally repudiated as useless and unsuccessful. This has been done too hastily. Such politics create confusion and no one outside the CEC has energy enough to find out what is going on each time.

Now the members of the CEC accuse each other of the mistakes that have been made in propagating and building up the farmer-labor movement. The fact is that all the leaders of our party at one time overestimated the possibilities in this field of action. The whole CEC talked about the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, its significance and its power — too enthusiastically basing its estimation on mere illusions. Now, when those great hopes have not been realized, some of them again begin to overestimate that the coming of LaFollette has "wholly" destroyed and eaten up the farmer-labor movement. This is no more true than the assumptions of a year ago.

Conditions, [examined] from the viewpoint of propaganda, from which our party must direct its work ... at present, have not changed very much within 2 or 3 years in this country. We, and the Finnish membership in general, have always emphasized the building up of our party, we have always been very unwilling to follow the [overly] flighty maneuvers and movements of the party in its agitation for the farmer-labor movement, because it has been plain to us that our party is unable to build up such an enormous movement in a day. We have emphasized the strengthening of the party by carrying on systematic agitation, by increasing the membership, etc. And in this respect we are in accord with the majority of the CEC. But at the same time we are of the opinion that the minority also has tendencies in the same direction. We cannot accept such a one-sided declaration that the farmer-labor agitation has now become wholly hopeless, when it has hitherto had such great possibilities. In short, the viewpoints of both groups have some sound points. Disagreements are very small and can be made big only by political dabbling, by intriguing, and by writing separate theses. This is only doing harm to our cause. The unity of our movement should be built on the fundamental point that at last, after numerous mistakes and incorrect estimates of conditions, we must give our main strength to the building up of our party. For this very reason we must carry our agitation everywhere; in some states we have possibilities to carry our propaganda through the slogan of the "Farmer-

Labor Party,” on the condition that we don’t try to make of it a magic word, supposing it solves all problems. It should be used only in the sense of propaganda and not as an [overly broad] maneuver as the CEC has hitherto used this slogan.

We know very well that the present controversy in the CEC does not lead to a split, but it has a certain disturbing effect on the party membership, it has disturbing influence on the stability of the party, it will injure the unity which we should be better able to build up. Again the CEC will send representatives to various districts to explain “the changed situation.” This will require money, but the membership was already dissatisfied last year because of the dictation of the CEC how party questions should be handled in the districts.

As for the other questions, the CEC shows the same wrong methods. When, for instance, money was needed to carry on the farmer-labor agitation, appeals were sent to the membership and branches for voluntary contributions, with the result that the most dutiful members responded. But right after this, an obligatory special assessment was levied, [with the result that] some paid only one assessment while others had to pay several times that amount.

It seems the CEC is afraid that the membership has nothing to do in the party. Therefore the CEC is feverishly piling up one duty after another. All kinds of decisions and duties are imposed on the membership at the same time. All of them are “important” and “most important.” As a consequence the membership receives these orders with a scornful smile and does not even try to act in accordance with them. It seems that there are too many officeholders in our National Office and somewhat poor [organization]. In spite of this, when some new activity is started, again a new department is established and it must have a director of its own. Is this necessary? We cannot tell,

but we feel that the next convention should strive to prepare a strict budget of the National Office, because the financial burdens of our party are becoming too heavy. It is also important that our district offices should get their share of the propaganda funds, for if they have no resources to carry out propaganda, they are of no use. Generally speaking we should not try to undertake overly big tasks, financially or politically, when our movement is only in its preliminary stage.

As to the reorganization of the party, we have already expressed our opinion. Several writers have lately been dealing with this question. The CI has decided that the Communist Parties in every country should strive to reconstruct themselves on the basis of shop nuclei. This principle, as has been many times pointed out, is the best method of organization. But it is plain that in the execution of the same, we are confronted with several difficulties in this country. For this reason we must start easily and carefully in this respect and the party convention must act carefully in regard to this matter.

It is evident that the party must enlarge and strengthen its activities in labor unions as well as in the other fields of agitation and recruiting. The solution of these questions will largely depend on how perfectly and soundly our party can approach them. First of all, we need at the present time stability, familiarity with our work, and educational Communist propaganda, which should have far-reaching aims but which should be strictly controlled and based on the understanding of the ideology of American workers. Simply we need awakening and organizing work. The conditions and the sharpening of the class contradictions of capitalism will work for us. But we should be able to speak to the masses about our party, about Communism.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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