

Lafadie

# FORE 'N AFT

Maritime Committee for a Communist Party

February 1948 #1

Dear Comrade:

This is the beginning of a Maritime News Letter whose purpose will be to assist in the fight to develop real Communist activity in our industry and in the United States, and to develop a program of action based upon the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, dedicated to the struggle for Socialism.

Because of the opportunist role of the present leadership of the CPUSA, (specifically, the waterfront leadership) and the resulting confusion to all workers, bona-fide Communist theory and activity has become a pressing necessity. In the maritime industry, the opportunism and careerism of the present CP leadership have been disastrous to the class-consciousness of the maritime worker and ruinous to maritime relations. None of the present problems of the unions of the industry can be resolved in any part to the satisfaction of the real interests of the workers until the core of all these problems, the character of the CP, is properly resolved. It is a political fantasy to believe that the unions' problems can be solved in the real interest of the workers without a real Communist Party giving militant leadership. Anything short of militant CP leadership of the working class results in what we witness today: confusion, splits and the resurgence of right-wing activity in the United States.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of all sincere Communists, whether currently CP members, expelled, dropped or resigned Communists, to build a real CP in the U.S. To do this NMU Communists can start in their own union - - and immediately! This is why some of us have started a simple, "old-fashioned", Communist unit - and for these four reasons:

1. We must fight the Imperialist preparation for war abroad and steps toward Fascism at home in order to assist the struggling People's Democracies throughout the world and to preserve our own Democracy.
2. We who believe in a socialist U. S. A. in our time are going to work for it.
3. We who helped build the NMU are going to fight for it and save it.

- 4. We know that none of these three can be achieved unless we build an independent and real Communist Party.

As you read this, face a few sour facts.. Consider the various fruits peddled as Communist policy in the NMU by the CP leadership, well-intentioned CP rank and filers and expelled Communists. Analyze your own recent record in the NMU. Just how Communist has it been. Have you, too, been "liberated" from the old principled Communist ideas and attitudes and are you now a sensible, practical machine character? Is the once solid Communist core in you dead - or only "withering away" at the moment. Are you an ersatz "loyal" CP hack, or on the other hand, has the CP's degeneration angered you so much that your goal has become the destruction of the CPUSA, rather than the building of a real CPUSA? Or - are you at the moment making the transition to respectable liberalism. If none of this fits, perhaps you are "romantically enough" a disillusioned Communist, or perhaps what Lenin called the "sniveller". Think it all over from the beginning and decide where you stand. It will make the difference for a long time to come.

Many Communists hold the illusion that the building of a real CP can be accomplished only through the complete destruction of the present CP at any cost. They nurture the false idea that the real CP they desire will rise from the ashes. They have fallen into the trap of such "logic" by assisting in the growth of the Rank and File Caucus in the NMU, believing that this was the only vehicle from which to fight an entrenched opportunistic machine.. Too many honest seamen enjoy membership in the Caucus only as a result of their rejection of the present CP leadership and their awareness of its many obvious errors. While grievances against the CP leadership are valid and correct, these seamen, who are not in principle anti-communist, are faced with the contradiction between, on the one hand, their awareness of the CP's opportunism, and on the other hand, their unawareness of the dangers of "Communist red-baiting", cooperation with Trotskyites and other wrecking elements within the Rank and File Caucus. Therefore, we feel that many Communists in the Caucus are duplicating the same practices they fought in the party.

WE WHO DESIRE TO WORK TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REAL COMMUNIST PARTY ON THE WATERFRONT, REJECT EQUALLY THE OPPORTUNIST POLICIES OF THE PRESENT CP WATERFRONT LEADERSHIP AND THE ANTI-WORKING CLASS ORIENTATION OF THE RANK AND FILE CAUCUS.

Before a Communist attempts solutions, he should really investigate the problems facing him. The basic analysis and solution for this period is contained in the Manifesto of the recent conference of the 9 Communist Parties in Belgrade. WE SUBSCRIBE TO THAT MANIFESTO.. (In the next weeks we will circulate this and related material to the Communists in the NMU)

The Conference found the world split into two camps. The Imperialist, anti-democratic camp, led by the U.S.A., has as its purpose the crushing of democracy and progress all over the world, the revival of Fascism, and the subjugation of the whole world to the U.S.. The anti-imperialist, democratic camp, led by the Soviet Union,

has as its purpose the blocking of imperialist aims, war and fascism, and the strengthening of democracy all over the world.

This "planned" war is not inevitable. There is a great gap between imperialist desire for war and their ability to implement their war plans. It becomes the responsibility of the American working class to the workers of the world to frustrate these ambitions of Wall St. Defense of their own interests as American workers is coincident with the defense of the interests of the workers of the world.

American Communists have a special role as Communists within the Agressor Nation To thwart these plans of American Imperialism.

We know that before the U.S.A. can seriously embark upon a third world war against the democracies of the world, she must first destroy all democratic rights and institutions of the American workers. Fascism in the U.S.A. is the prerequisite for war against the Soviet Union. Fascism is the frantic "solution" of Wall St. in this period of the sharpening of the universal crisis of Capitalism and the strengthening of world democracy and Socialism.

The working class must be prepared for leadership in this crisis. Therefore, our program in the NMU must be to smash the Marshall Plan for the domination of the world; to smash the Taft-Hartley Law without legalistic illusions of compromise; to refuse to load and sail ships destined for imperialist use. We can do this successfully if we don't fall into the error of underestimating the strength of the American working class or the democratic forces of the world, or of the NMU. We can do this if we take a lesson from the Australian longshoremen and the Canadian seamen who stopped all shipment of cargoes destined for Dutch imperialist use against the Indonesian people.

We can take lessons from our own maritime industry. Remember 1917  
- - West coast longshoremen refused to load ships destined for intervention against the Soviet Union. Remember -- Frisco longshoremen who refused to load ships destined for Japanese imperialist expansion.

Mass militant action to enlist public support for the Peoples of China, Greece and Indonesia must be obtained. This, the present leadership of the CP has consistently failed to do. We point to their notorious failure to rally support for the French working class in its recent crisis, leaving the French workers completely unsupported. Fortunately the valiant efforts of Communist and non-Communist crew members of 2 ships docked in Marseilles left these French workers not entirely unaided. The NMU is in a key position to militantly guarantee in eloquent actions the national sovereignty of the European nations threatened by the Marshall Plan.

The prevention of Fascism in America is the prevention of another world war. There is only one way that Communists can effectively plan this fight against Fascism and Imperialism, and that is through the application of the People's Front in the USA. To understand this

(4)

clearly, NMU Communists should carefully study Dmitroff's "United Front Against Fascism" (Report to the 7th Congress of the C.I.), the Manifesto and the organ of the Cominform ("For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy") and Tito's recent report to the People's Front in Yugoslavia. An important point made by Tito was that the People's Front was not obsolete, as some Communists have recently decided, but more valuable than ever.

Dmitroff said in his report that the application of the People's Front in the U.S.A. should be - - an anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, non-red-baiting third party. Today we have the beginnings of a 3rd party in America, whose orientation is anti-fascist and anti-imperialist. Luckily, due to bad judgement on the part of the anti-3rd party forces, who decided to kill a 3rd party by leaving it en masse, we have also a non-red-baiting 3rd party. Although the program of this party is a correct one, there are subtle dangers involved. The 3rd party is too much a Wallace party, a one man party. It still harbors shame-faced illusions about possibilities in the Democratic Party. Despite repeated warnings from its own members that the success of a genuine third party must rely basically on organized labor, the CP leadership in all the discussion on a 3rd party, has relied on public statements, and the prestige of "leaders" instead of the organization of a membership 3rd party. NMU Communists should work for the 3rd party and for clarity on the Third Party problem. They should not be misled by the previous CPUSA "prematurity" double-talk on the 3rd party in America, which resulted in its current tailing after Wallace. The guarantee of a correct 3rd party in America, which will not be sold out in the course of the election campaign, is a real Communist core working for a 3rd party now.

On the 3rd party question-or any other question -we are faced with the confusion produced by a phony CP. There is no Communist Party in the USA today. The party which bankrupted that name is an opportunist, social-democratic party, whose leadership misleads the American working class from within. Nowhere has the CPUSA leadership (and specifically the Waterfront Leadership) better exposed its unprincipled deals and job security than in the NMU. Here the worst manifestations of opportunism show clearly - - from economism and tailism to open degeneracy and gangsterism. Its main strength has been based not on a real Communist program in the interests of the seamen and workers generally, but on how many Communists (in name only) it could elect to office. Its whole apparatus has been devoted to perpetuating in office people whose main interest in Communism has been and still is "Job Security". Correct Communist leadership should not be the building and perpetuation of an intricate "pie-card" apparatus. Instead, responsible Communists must project correct policy, and thereby earn the respect and trust of non-Communist and Communist rank and filers alike.

The revision of Marxist theory to fit the opportunist line of the present CP leadership has resulted in mass expulsions from the CP nationally. In the NMU this has resulted in expulsions and mass demoralization. - - - and created the present split in the union. The day is not too far off when the present CPUSA leadership will have to answer to the workers for assisting in the formulation of

the red-baiting resolution at the National CIO Convention of 1946; for its vote against the Veto at the N.Y. State CIO Convention of 1947; for voting for and even participating in formulating the resolution on the Marshall Plan at the 1947 National CIO Convention. The main weapon of the leadership of the CPUSA against any militant working-class leadership, both within and without the party, was and still remains slander, character assassination and rumor-spreading. The complete suppression of criticism and democracy within the party has resulted in the building of a monumental and bureaucratic machine.

The U.S.A. needs a real Communist Party - one which would not be afraid to affiliate with a Communist Information Bureau because of Wall Street's reaction or because its rank opportunism would be exposed in an international body. The U.S.A. needs an anti-opportunist party which could have only one consideration - - to lead correctly regardless of the "repressions" involved. It would be a party which stood and fought for Socialism in our time. This is the party that we Communists in the NMU have to build. It can best be built by the coordinated work of Communists in the CPUSA, expelled, dropped and resigned Communists.

Because we Communists, who helped build the NMU, now have the responsibility of saving it, we have to clear the confusion of incorrect policies and attitudes. We have to develop an independent role and tail behind no man or caucus. We have to prove in this key union what has to be proven all over the U.S.A.

For this reason, we are setting up "house" - a Communist unit. Our intentions are simply these: present a correct independent Communist position in the NMU; find and recruit the right guys who are going to build a real Communist core in the NMU and a real CP in the US; distribute the literature needed for understanding today's problems, including the Cominform Organ, New Times and Marxist classics. We have to start study classes; we have to work in conjunction with all other principled groups in the U.S.A. working to build a real CP. We will do now, with modest beginning, what we should have done long ago in the NMU. And we will analyze ruthlessly all past "Communist" errors.

Therefore, we ask you to consider where you stand. If you are with us, we want you to help us implement our intentions. By the next issue we will be set up organizationally with a P.O. Box - etc., through which you will be able to contact us. If you disagree with us on certain points, we urge you to write your disagreements and your reactions so that we can carry on a systematic Communist discussion which will result in the most valuable collection of Communists. In any case, face the issues squarely and decide whether you are a Communist or not. If you are, there is no obstacle in the way of our common work for a real CP and a clear Communist policy in the NMU supported not only by all Communists, but by the NMU rank-and-file.

We have been able to mention only the essential points, and very briefly. Even within these limits, we have only attempted to project

(6)

a correct Communist policy without detailed proof. This is a good starting point for all of us to enter the discussion. We expect to hear from you soon, and we expect to work with you.

FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALISM, FASCISM AND WAR!

FOR A STRONG NMU GUARANTEED BY A REAL COMMUNIST CORE!

FOR A REAL COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE USA IN 1948!

FOR SOCIALISM IN OUR TIME!

Comradely yours,

Maritime Committee for  
a Communist Party