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(Stenographer's note: The following is a rough draft of a discussion held with Comrade Crux July 20, 1938.)

QUESTION: What influence can "prosperity", an economic rise of American capitalism in the next period, have upon our activity as based on the transitional program?

CRUX: It is very difficult to answer because it is an equation with many unknown elements, magnitudes. The first question is if a conjunctural improvement is probable in the near future. It is very difficult to answer, especially for a person who does not follow the charts from day to day. As I see from the New York Times, the socialists are very uncertain about the question. In last Sunday's issue of the New York Times, the business index showed a very confusing tendency. During the last week there was a loss, two weeks before a rise, and so on. If you consider the general picture we see that a new crisis has begun showing an almost vertical line of decline up until January of this year, then the line becomes hesitating -- a zigzag line, but with general declining tendency. But the decline during this year is undoubtedly slower than the decline during the nine months of the preceding year. If we consider the preceding period beginning with the slump of 1929, we see that the crisis lasted almost $3\frac{1}{2}$ years before the upturn began, with some smaller ups and downs, lasting $4\frac{1}{2}$ years -- it was Roosevelt "prosperity". In this way the last cycle was of 8 years, $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of crisis and $4\frac{1}{2}$ years of relative "prosperity", 8 years being considered as a normal time for a capitalist cycle. Now the new crisis began in August 1937, and in nine months has reached the point which was reached in the preceding crisis in $2\frac{1}{2}$ years. It is very difficult to make a prognosis now concerning the time, the point of a new rise. If we consider the new slump from the point of view of its deepness, I repeat, the work of $2\frac{1}{2}$ years is completed by the crisis, yet it has not reached the lowest point of the preceding crisis. If we consider the new crisis from the point of view of time -- nine years, or seven, eight years, it would be too early for a new up-movement. That is why I repeat that prognosis is difficult. Is it necessary that the new crisis should reach the same point -- the lowest point -- as the preceding crisis? It is probable, but it is not absolutely sure. What is characteristic of the new cycle is that "prosperity" did not reach the high point of preceding prosperity, but from that we cannot make in an abstract manner a conclusion about the nadir. What characterizes the Roosevelt prosperity is the fact that it was a movement mainly of the light industries, not of the building trades, the heavy industries. This made this movement develop in a very limited fashion. That is precisely the reason why the breakdown came so catastrophically, because the new cycle did not have a solid basis of heavy industries, especially of the building trades industries which are characterized by new investments with a long term perspective and so on.

Now we can theoretically suppose that the new up-movement will include more than building industries -- the heavy industries in general -- in view of the fact that despite consumption during the last period the machinery was not renewed sufficiently and now the demand for it will be greater than during the last conjuncture. It is possible it can give a greater, a more solid up-movement than the preceding. It is absolutely not contradictory to our general analysis of a sick, declining capitalism causing greater and greater misery. This theoretical possibility is to a certain degree supported by the military investment in public relief works. It signifies from a large historical point of view that the nation becomes poorer in order to permit better conjunctures to-day and to-morrow. We can compare such a conjuncture with a tremendous expense to the general organism.

It can be considered as possibly a new pre-war conjuncture, but when will it begin? Will the down-movement continue? It is possible -- probable. In that sense we will have in the next period not 13 or 14 millions, but 15 millions of unemployed. In this sense all we said about the transitional program will be reinforced in every respect, but we are adopting a hypothesis of a new up-movement in the next few months, in half a year or a year. Such a movement may be inevitable.

To the first question, if such an up-movement can be more favorable to the general perspective before our party, I believe we can answer with a categorical yes, that it would be more favorable for us. There cannot be any reason to believe that American capitalism can of itself in the next period become a sound, healthy capitalism, that it can absorb the 13 millions of unemployed. But the question is, if we formulate it in a very simple and arithmetical form -- if in the next year or two years the industries absorb 4 millions of workers from the 13 millions unemployed, that will leave 9 million. Would that be favorable from the point of view of the revolutionary movement? I believe we can answer with a categorical yes.

We have a situation in a country -- a very revolutionary situation in a very conservative country -- with a subjective backwardness on the part of the mentality of the working class. In such a situation, economic pick-ups -- sharp economic pick-ups, ups-and-downs -- from a historical point of view have a secondary character but in the immediate sense have a profound effect on the lives of millions of workers. To-day they have a very great importance. Such shake-ups are of a very great revolutionary importance. They shake off their conservativeness; they force them to seek an account of what is happening, what is the perspective. And every such shake-up pushes some stratum of the workers on the revolutionary road. More concretely, now the American workers are in an impasse -- a blind alley. The big movement, C.I.O., has no immediate perspective because it is not guided by a revolutionary party and the difficulties of the C.I.O. are very great. From the other side, the revolutionary elements are too weak in order to give to the movement a sharp turn to the political road. Imagine that during the next period four millions of workers enter the industries. It will not soften the social antagonism -- on the contrary. It will sharpen them. If the industries were capable of absorbing the 13 million or 11 million of unemployed, then it would signify for a long period a softening of the class struggle, but it can only absorb a part, and the majority will remain unemployed. Every unemployed person sees that the employed have work. He will look for work, and not finding any will enter into the unemployed movement. I believe in this period our slogan of the sliding scale can receive very great popularity; that is, that we ask for work for everybody under decent conditions in a popular form: "We must find work for all, under decent conditions with decent salaries". The first period of a rise -- economic rise -- would be very favorable, especially for this slogan. I believe also that the other very important slogan of defense, workers' militia, etc. would also find favorable soil, a base, because through such a limited and uncertain rise - economic rise - the capitalists become very anxious to have immediate profits and they look with great hostility on the unions which disturb the possibility of new rise in profits. In such conditions I believe that Hague would be imitated on a large scale.

The question of the labor party before the trade unions. Of course the C.I.O. through a new prosperity would have a new possibility of development. In that sense we can suppose that the improvement of the conjuncture would postpone the question of the labor party. Not that it will lose its whole propagandistic importance, but it will lose its acuteness. We can then prepare the progressive elements to accept this idea and be ready when the new crisis approaches, which will not be long in coming.

I believe that this question of Haguelism has a tremendous importance, and that a new prosperity, a new upturn, would give us greater possibilities. A new upturn will signify that the definite crisis, the definite conflicts are postponed for some years in spite of the sharp conflicts during the rise itself. And we have the greatest interest in winning more time because we are weak and the workers are not prepared in the United States. But even a new upturn will give us a very very short time -- the disproportion between the mentality and the methods of American workers in the social crisis, this disproportion is terrific. However, I have the impression that we must give some concrete examples of success and not limit ourselves only to giving good theoretical advice. If you take the New Jersey situation, it is a tremendous blow not only to social democracy but to the working class. Hague is just beginning. We also are just beginning, but Hague is a thousand times more powerful.

Of course the question of the LP cannot be considered independent from the general development in the next period. If a new prosperity comes for some time and postpones the question of a LP, then the question will for some time become more or less academic, but we will continue to prepare the party in order not to lose time when the question again becomes acute, but such a tremendous prosperity is not very probable now and if the economic situation remains as now, then the party can change in a short time. The most important fact we must underline is the total difference in America in connection with a working class from Europe. In Europe, let us say in Germany before Hitler, in Austria, France now, Great Britain, the question of a party for the workers was looked upon as a necessity, it was a commonplace for the vanguard of the working class and for a large stratum of the masses themselves.

In the United States the situation is absolutely different. In France political agitation consists in the attempts of the CP to win the workers, of the SP to win the workers, and every conscious or semi-conscious worker stands before a choice. Should he adhere to the SP or the CP or Radical SP? For the Radical Socialist Party it is not such a problem, since that is mostly for the foreman, but the workers have to choose between the SP and the CP. In the United States the situation is that the working class needs a party - its own party. It is the first step in political education. We can say that this first step was due five or ten years ago. Yes, theoretically that is so, but insofar as the workers were more or less satisfied by the trade union machinery, and even lived without this machinery, the propaganda in favor of a working class party was more or less theoretical, abstract and coincided with the propaganda of certain centrist and communist groups and so on. Now the situation has changed. It is an objective fact in the sense that the new trade unions created by the workers came to an impasse - a blind alley - and the only way for workers already organized in trade unions is to join their forces in order to influence legislation, to influence the class struggle. The working class stands before an alternative. Either the trade unions will be dissolved or they will join for political action. That is the objective situation, not created by us, and in this sense the agitation for a working class party becomes now not an abstract but a totally concrete step in progress for the workers organized in the trade unions in the first instance and for those not organized at all. In the second place it is an absolutely concrete task determined by economic and social conditions. It would be absurd for us to say that because the new party issues from the political amalgamation of the trade unions it will of necessity be opportunistic. We will not invite the workers to make this same step in the same way as abroad. Of course if we had any real choice between a reformist party or a revolutionary party, we would say this is

your address (meaning the revolutionary party). But a party is absolutely necessary. It is the only road for us in this situation. To say that we will fight against opportunism, as of course we will fight to-day and to-morrow, especially if the working class party had been organized, by breaking a progressive step which can produce opportunism, is a very reactionary policy, and sectarianism is often reactionary because it opposes the necessary action of the working class.

I believe that the most fighting elements in the trade unions should be our youth, who should not oppose our movement to the LP but go inside the LP, even a very opportunist LP. They must be inside. That is their duty. That our young comrades separate the transitional program from the LP is understandable because the transitional program is an international question, but for the United States they are connected - both questions - and I believe that some of our young comrades accept the transitional program without good understanding of its meaning, for otherwise the formal separation of it would lose for them all importance.

LABOR PARTY -- PROGRESSIVE? REACTIONARY?

Hal Draper

The Minority in the present discussion has tried as far as possible to center the debate around the basic issues. At the beginning especially the Majority spokesmen were quite free with the accusation that we want to have nothing to do with the LP movement at all, that we want to "stand aside" from this movement and let the bureaucrats have free rein; in this way a sectarian straw man was erected which it was only too easy to knock down. We were accused of being entirely negative, of being only "against", of having no positive line for the party; but more than half of the Minority Resolution (Bulletin #6) is devoted to a positive statement of a line of action for the party -- which, to be sure, the Majority has the right to disagree with but not to ignore. We were accused of being completely abstract and "theoretical" in our approach, having nothing to say regarding concrete tactics in local instances; but we have dealt at length, especially in the New York discussions, with Pennsylvania, Minnesota, the ALP, etc. But these are not the central issues.

The central issue, for scientific socialists seeking an attitude toward the LP, is our estimate of the effect of the formation of a LP on the development of the working class -- ie, whether a LP could play a progressive role. The Majority resolution as well as all its spokesmen, says yes. Our position is that it cannot, and that is the basic reason why we cannot advocate its formation when none exists.

We do not intend to repeat at length here the arguments and analysis on this question put forward in the Minority resolution, which devotes a fairly large section to it. We asked: Our position has been that a LP cannot be progressive in this period of capitalist decline; this conclusion is based on the following analysis; what was or is wrong with it? And if a LP cannot be progressive under conditions of capitalist decline, how does it become progressive under conditions of acute social crisis? -- This question was labeled by the Majority "juggling with dead quotations", namely, our past position, "abstract theoretics", etc. In its stead they put forward their own theories "proving" the progressive character of a LP. There has been no scarcity of such new-born theories.

1. The theory of the "mass movement". -- This is the theory put forward by the Majority Resolution itself. According to it, we opposed advocacy of a LP in the past because "In these discussions we saw only two aspects of the question -- a labor party which did not exist in reality... or a possible fully developed labor party some time in the future" but are now confronted with an intermediate stage -- the existence of a mass movement toward a LP but no LP actually formed. This is the changed condition which reverses our position. -- Now the starting point of this theory is just not true; we did not ignore this consideration. The Clarityites raised this time and again in our discussions; Shachtman in the N.I. (mar., 1935) took it up as Browder's motivation of the changed line of the CP; Burnham in the Appeal (1936); etc. This "juggling with quotations" by the Majority is merely a disingenuous attempt to prove that we were correct, are correct, and will be correct, before, during and after.

But suppose we did not consider this case, what then? It would seem an elementary proposition, that if we were opposed to the formation of a LP on the ground that such a party could play only a reactionary role,

THE EXISTENCE OF A MASS MOVEMENT FOR SOMETHING WE DON'T WANT -- DOESN'T CHANGE OUR MIND ABOUT NOT WANTING IT. Does this mean the mass movement is an entirely negative factor in our considerations? Far from it! The existence of this movement means that sections of the workers want to break with capitalist politics, are groping for independent political action. Their still backward mentality leads them to believe that a LP would really give political independence. We do not agree, we want to show them that the continuation of their movement leads them to revolutionary politics, to a revolutionary program. This is too far ahead of them, they will not understand us, but cling to their LP illusions? It is here that Crux's remarks on the Transitional Program are relevant in the LP discussion:

"We have repeated many times that the scientific character of our activity consists in the fact that we adapt our program not to political conjunctures or the thought or mood of the masses as this mood is today, but we adapt our program to the objective situation as it is represented by the economic class structure of society. . . This program...cannot be understood by the workers as a whole. It would be very good if the vanguard would understand it in the next period and that they would then turn and say to the workers, 'You must save yourselves from fascism.' . . . The reformists have a good smell for what the audience wants -- as Norman Thomas -- he gives them that. But that is not serious revolutionary activity. We must have the courage to be unpopular, to say 'you are fools', 'you are stupid', 'they betray you'. . ." (Bulletin #6, pp. 11, 12, 14)

The progressive character of the workers' desire for independent political action does not insure that the LP form into which it is channeled really realizes this desire, rather than distorts it. This is a question which we must decide on the basis of our own political ideas, not on the basis of the backward mentality of the workers. And then bring these political ideas into the backward mass movement itself, demonstrating their validity not merely through ex cathedra pronouncements but by going through the LP experiences of the workers with them, always pushing them forward.

2. The theory of the transitional program. -- I refer not to the validity of the transitional program itself, upon which we base our position, but to the theory of the Majority that it is precisely our analysis of the "death agony of capitalism" which makes the LP progressive. This is already dealt with in the Minority Resolution. Let us see how the Majority resolution establishes the connection. The attempt in this direction is in the first paragraph.

Under the conditions of social crisis, trade union action alone cannot solve "even the most pressing immediate problems of the workers." This is absolutely correct -- "the crisis...cancels out the gains of the strike victories..." The workers look for a way out; a section of them at least turns toward political action as the remedy. --Is political action the way out? Certainly, but not just any kind of political action. Not capitalist politics, of course; not reformist politics certainly; the whole point of the general thesis is that only revolutionary political action can solve "even the most pressing immediate problems of the workers". And our task in this period is to hammer away at this idea, counterpose revolutionary politics to the illusory solutions proposed by others, demonstrate this concretely through agitation for our transitional demands, expose the inability of the LP or LP movements to do anything for the workers.

The conclusion the Majority draws is rather -- to tell the workers to form a labor party. Do we tell them that the LP will be as powerless

as trade union action to solve their problems? It would be rather difficult to convince the famous "raw worker" to go ahead and form a LP if this were so --- since he is not so much interested in improving his mind along psychologically progressive lines as getting what he wants. Does not then the Majority believe that the LP will be as powerless as trade union action to solve these problems? Here we come to the third theory.

3. The theory of the "revolutionary labor party". -- According to the Majority, it would be false and "ultimatistic" to tell the workers in advance that a LP could not solve "their most pressing immediate problems". True, a reformist LP could not! But we do not advocate a reformist LP; we advocate a LP with the revolutionary transitional program (see Shachtman - Burnham article in N.I.).

Does this mean that such an animal as a "revolutionary LP" may come into existence in America today? The Majority spokesmen disagree on this point. Some say: No, we know that as well as you; but we tell the workers to fight for it in order to set them in motion. Shachtman is more categorical: A "revolutionary LP" is "not excluded"; it has been seen before, vide the Norwegian Labor Party which affiliated to the C.I. after the war (and which was bounced out because it continued to carry out a reformist line under cover of the formal affiliation); the question of whether the LP can be revolutionized will be determined only in the course of struggle, we cannot tell the workers in advance, etc.

Now we too are in favor of raising revolutionary demands inside the LP movement in order to set the workers in motion; that is not the point of divergence. The point is precisely this: whether we foster the illusion that the LP will be able effectively to carry out the revolutionary program which we propose.

We have the perspective that the workers in the coming period will be forced to turn more and more toward a revolutionary program. If no LP exists, then the only direction they can turn is toward us, provided we know how to reach them effectively with our message and organization. But if a LP exists, and if the revolutionists themselves say to the workers: "It is not necessary for you to organize for the revolution under the banner of the Fourth International; your next step, now that you are for the revolutionary program, is to fight to make the LP your revolutionary instrument", THEN, instead of the question being posed at that point -- capitulation to capitalist politics or forward with us, the Bolsheviks, -- a third path is indicated through which the workers are told to go, experimenting in making the LP revolutionary. Between the revolutionized workers and the revolutionary party, a half-way house is interposed.

Now, it may be that the workers, or some workers, may have to go through these experiences. But our job is to attempt to shorten this process as much as possible, to convince at least the vanguard now that they must come directly to the revolutionary party, and to utilize their experiences with the LP now for this purpose. Our job is to foster disillusionment with the LP idea now, instead of strengthening these illusions by our own advocacy, à la Shachtman et al. It is precisely the most advanced workers, the vanguard, who will be disillusioned with the LP idea most quickly, and it is they who will turn to the others and say "This party showed us the way soonest; it is a good party."

4. The theory of "As against". -- This is one of the new and cruder theoretical crop. It goes: "A labor party would be progressive -- AS AGAINST the Democratic and Republican parties. If the LP were directed against the

revolutionists, it would be reactionary. But this is not the case. It is in fact directed against the Dems and Repubs. Therefore it is progressive." This theory has latterly become Shachtman's favorite.

First let us say, if this argument were correct, then what happens to the protestations of the majority that their LP position flows from, is indissolubly connected with, their transitional program? This approach would justify, and was used to justify, advocating a LP ten years ago.

"As against" arguments open the door to practically everything. The Keep America Out of War Committee is progressive as against the collective security advocates; does it not result from the progressive sentiment of workers who are opposed to the war preparations of the government? This argument is false, because this organization crystallizes these undoubtedly progressive sentiments into a futile, pacifist, objectively reactionary channel; but the argument is no more worthwhile when applied to the LP. When prices rise 20%, a 5% rise in wages is an advance as against maintenance of the status quo, but we advocate no less than a 20% rise in wages. Etc., etc.

Is the LP directed against the revolutionists or against the old capitalist parties? They haven't even heard of the SWP, says Shachtman, so how can the movement be directed against us? Shachtman admits that we were correct in saying that the organization of the ALP in New York was directed against the socialist movement, to corral socialistic workers to vote for Roosevelt under a new, "labor" emblem, but this is a thing of the past and peculiar to New York.

A labor party, as distinct from a movement for it, exists in only two states -- New York and Minnesota. Whom are these directed against? Even Shachtman admits the point for the N.Y. ALP (add the recent electoral coalition between the ALP and the Republican party). Is the Minnesota FLP directed against the capitalist parties? Our Minnesota comrades, who are for the Majority, even now characterize the FLP as "the Minnesota section of the Roosevelt machine". This is well known. (Well, anyway, the FLP is progressive as against the Republican Party.)

There is no national LP at the present time. Under conditions where the social crisis will lead to the revolutionization of the workers, it is quite possible that the lesser evil for the bourgeoisie and bourgeois labor leaders will be the formation of the famous "independent" labor party, as a preventive measure to keep the leftward-moving workers from going too far. It is in this sense that the LP, if and when formed, would be directed against us even if they never heard of the SWP. For they have heard of the revolution.

5. The theory of the "relationship of forces". -- This is contained in written form (aside from the fact that it has been put forward in discussion) in the "Proposed Amendments to Labor Party Thesis" (Bulletin #6) by Goldman, supported by Shachtman and Burnham. The first amendment consists of the insertion of the following sentence: "In general it can be said that so long as the revolutionary party has the support of only a small minority of the working class and so long as the vast majority of the workers support capitalist parties, a movement for independent political action on the part of the workers is progressive in character and must be supported by revolutionary Marxists."

Now, "a movement for independent political action" certainly is progressive in our opinion, as we have explained, in the sense of the progressive subjective development of the workers themselves, apart from the form this movement takes. If this were all the meaning of the amendment, then (1) it would hardly be worth while making it as an amendment, and (2) it should not be conditioned by the "so long as" clauses, because it does not depend upon them. I gather that Goldman's meaning is : the formation of a LP would be progressive so long as this relationship of forces held true. This is the only meaningful interpretation I can see.

If this is seriously proposed by Goldman, Shachtman et al as their theoretical motivation "in general" for the Majority position (and one must naturally accept it as a seriously-intended proposal) then all the rest of the Majority resolution, as well as 99% of the speeches for it by the Majority must be thrown out of the window as irrelevant detail brought in to confuse the picture. For the condition "in general" that Goldman puts forward has existed since the foundation of capitalism in America. It certainly existed five, ten years ago. The amendment categorically makes it the decisive criterion judging the progressiveness of a LP. What then has the transitional program and the death agony of capitalism got to do with it all (except to betoken a change in our favor in this relationship of forces)? What then has the existence of a mass movement for a LP got to do with it? or almost anything else except the Goldman-Shachtman amendment?

The PC Majority are six characters in search of a theory. They are suffering now from an embarras de richesse. You pays your money and you takes your choice.

IS THE LABOR PARTY MOVEMENT PROGRESSIVE?

Albert Goldman

The arguments of Corrade Draper and all other opponents of the resolution in favor of supporting a labor party offer some of the best examples of a failure to consider the labor movement as a living developing phenomenon. They enunciate a series of propositions, such as: it is not the business of a revolutionary party to advocate the creation of a reformist party; a labor party will support an imperialist war, etc., etc. and then proceed to draw the apparently logical conclusion that it is incorrect to support a growing movement for a labor party. Actual developments within the labor movement, their tendencies and significance are given minor consideration. The emphasis is always placed on logical reasoning.

That some of these arguments were made not so long ago by those who now support the labor party resolution in no way minimizes their incorrectness at present. They were wrong when made before and are wrong now.

Would the formation by the trade unions of their own party constitute a progressive step at the present stage of labor's development? That of course is the heart of the problem and our attitude should be determined by our answer to that question. In considering that question we need not consider whether the formation of a labor party is the most probable course which the labor unions will follow. Whether or not a labor party will actually come into existence is immaterial in a discussion on the question whether or not the formation of a labor party would constitute a progressive step.

The American workers at the present moment support two openly capitalist parties; they do not conceive of these parties as representing exclusively capitalist interests; their political consciousness is so backward that they accept without question the idea that a capitalist party can also represent their interests. A movement begins which, by and large, is clearly in the direction of separating the working class from the capitalist parties. It is impossible to interpret recent developments in the labor movement in any other way. It is true that Labor's Non-Partisan League supports Democratic candidates; it is true that the whole movement is not clear as to its aims; it is true that the trade union bureaucrats place obstacles in the way. But it would be utter blindness on our part if we should fail to see that the general direction of the whole movement is towards independent political action.

A vague and inchoate movement for independent political action such as we are confronted with demands of revolutionary Marxists that they attempt to channelize it and to give it a definite objective. That objective must be of a character which will appear as necessary and feasible to the workers and which will elicit an active response from them. To present our party to the workers as the instrument which they should use to express their desire for independent political action would be a futile gesture. It would evoke no response from them whatsoever. This statement is made not only on the basis of a general knowledge of the present state of consciousness of the working class but on the strength of the testimony of all our active trade unionists, without exception.

The only organizational aim which is understandable to the workers and which has a real chance of setting them into motion is the formation of a labor party. To take advantage of the general tendency for independent political action, to tie ourselves up with the labor movement instead of standing aloof from its political life, it is necessary to accept the idea and support the movement for a labor party. Any other course places us in a helpless position as far as influencing the general movement in a revolutionary direction is concerned.

Where the vast majority of the workers support avowed capitalist parties it would be incorrect to support a labor party movement only under circumstances where the workers are obviously turning towards the revolutionary party. Lacking such a situation the movement for a labor party is progressive in character and support of it by revolutionary Marxists is dictated by that circumstance.

To insist that our party should be counterposed at the present moment to the Republican or Democratic parties is tantamount to saying that it is a matter of indifference to us whether the workers support a labor party or the open capitalist parties. To strengthen the tendency for independent political action we must accept the necessity and advisability of giving whole-hearted support to the labor party movement.

What gives the labor party movement a progressive character? What makes anything progressive from the point of view of revolutionary Marxism? Any movement which sets forces into motion against the capitalist system and weakens that system, which makes possible a further advance of the toiling masses is progressive in character.

Why did we declare that the struggle of the Ethiopians against Italian imperialism was progressive in character? It will be remembered that the sectarians pointed out how badly the Ethiopian people were treated by Haile Selassie and that therefore it would make no difference whether the Italian imperialists or the Ethiopian landed aristocracy won. We, on the other hand, considered the war of the Ethiopians progressive because in the light of the general struggle against capitalism, the victory of the Ethiopian people would weaken the system of imperialism and bring the revolutionary movement closer to its goal.

Why do we characterize the struggle of the Loyalist Government against the Spanish fascists as progressive? Here too, sectarians point to the shooting of revolutionary workers by the Loyalist Government to oppose our position. Our attitude is, while pointing out that the methods used by the Loyalist Government helped the fascists, that a victory of the Loyalist Government would afford the workers a greater opportunity to go forward.

Would the formation of a labor party help tear the workers away from the capitalist parties, would it teach them the simple lesson of the necessity for the working class to have its own political party, would it afford greater opportunities for us to make political contacts with the workers? To answer in the affirmative, as we must, is to characterize the labor party movement as progressive and

making it incumbent upon us to support it.

Subtle distinctions are made between the labor party movement as being progressive and the organization of a labor party as being retrogressive, between the progressive nature of the labor party movement as far as the workers are concerned and its retrogressive nature as far as our party is concerned. It is absolutely incorrect to separate the movement from its logical and immediate organizational objective. As I indicated before, were we to present our party as the immediate goal for the labor party movement, we would be unable to affect the tendency for independent political action in the slightest degree. Should no section of the labor movement advocate an organizational objective which would appear plausible to the workers the chances are that the movement for independent political action would be seriously retarded.

To say that the movement for a labor party is progressive in character while the actual organization of a labor party would be a reactionary step is equivalent to saying that the struggle of the Ethiopians is progressive while their victory would be reactionary. An argument like that may sound plausible to schoolmen but not to workers.

Nor can we make a distinction between what is progressive for our party and for the workers. Such a distinction carried to its logical conclusion would mean that we would be satisfied to sit back and say that the proletarian revolution is the only thing that is progressive for us. Everything else may be progressive for the workers but not for us. We would then insist upon the unconditional surrender of the capitalist class and retire to our class rooms. What is progressive for the workers is progressive for the revolutionary party.

The argument is stressed that a labor party, while progressive in the period of capitalist upswing, cannot be progressive in the period of capitalist decline. In the former period, so the argument goes, a labor party could gain concessions from the capitalist class but not so in the present period of decline. Hence a labor party would not play a progressive role. But even a revolutionary movement is unable, in a period of capitalist decline, to gain as much for the workers as in the period when capitalism was making huge profits. This is not to say that a revolutionary movement cannot gain more for the workers than a reformist movement. It simply means that in the period of capitalist decline the working-class movement must fight harder and will get less than in the period of capitalist upswing. The criterion of the possible achievements of a labor party to determine its progressive character is an absolutely false one. The mobilization of the workers as a class on the political arena, the setting them into motion against the capitalist class, the struggle for certain demands and not their achievement are the factors which should determine our attitude with reference to supporting the labor party movement.

To clinch the argument against supporting a labor party the opponents of the majority resolution point out that a labor party, if organized, will be reformist in character and will support any imperialist war. Would such an argument have any effect upon us when

we participate in the organization of trade unions? Will not the bureaucrats of the trade unions be just as reformist, will they not support an imperialist war just as enthusiastically as the bureaucrats of the labor party? Of course we know that there are differences between a labor party and trade unions but the argument on the basis of the future activities of a labor party can be used to apply with reference to trade unions. It is the general effect which the organization of trade unions has upon the working class that determines our support in organizing trade unions. The same general rule applies in determining our attitude to a labor party.

Indirectly and in spite of themselves the opponents of a labor party orientation admit the progressive character of the labor party movement. For they contend that they will advocate support of independent candidates by the trade unions as against supporting candidates of the capitalist parties. On what theory, we ask. Simply for the purpose of teaching the workers through experience? But we do not advocate a war for that purpose. We believe in teaching the workers through such experiences as are in their general tendencies progressive. To support independent candidates without considering the movement for a labor party progressive creates a dangerous contradiction between our theories and our acts.

But the workers must be told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Yes, that is correct. But those experienced in the practical activities of the labor movement also know that one does not go through the whole gamut of Marxian theory on all occasions. What to say and when to say it are questions involved in the general problem of effective propaganda. To show that it is necessary for the trade unions to create their own party and guard against the illusions that the problems of the working class can, in the long run, be solved without a revolution led by a revolutionary party, requires great attention and skill. But the difficulty of that task does not absolve us from supporting the labor party movement.

The opponents of the labor party resolution point to the change in our line and show that we argued differently some time ago! Some of the proponents of the majority resolution tend to argue that a change in the conditions of the labor movement made necessary a change in our policy. That is true only in the sense that the general movement for a labor party brought our attention to the fact that our previous formulation was wrong. It is not a question of showing that we were right before and are right now. For me personally it is a question of recognizing and admitting a wrong formulation. Not our failure to champion a labor party when there was no movement for it was wrong. But a wrong formulation which did not permit us unambiguously to support a labor party movement when it assumed considerable dimensions constituted our mistake.

To those who are seriously concerned with the growth of a revolutionary party, any contradiction that arises between an accepted policy and the living movement, must immediately dictate a change in policy. If the recognition of a mistake will give our opponents great satisfaction let them make the most of it. We shall proceed with our attempts to further the progress of the labor movement.

WHICH WAY:

TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS AND SOVIET POWER OR A LABOR PARTY AND A LABOR GOVERNMENT

by
David Cowles

I. A MINOR TRAGEDY.

We stand on the brink of another world war. Unless we are able to end it with revolution we will emerge from it under the most brutal repression the modern world has seen.

The major tragedy of the international working-class is the complete bankruptcy of its leadership in the face of this crisis. That we should need, in times like these, to reconsider the Labor Party question instead of using the precious weeks and months to discuss, to analyze, to develop and to absorb the transitional demands in our daily activities and our daily propaganda -- this is only one of the minor tragedies. However, we had better consider the matter carefully lest what is minor today becomes major tomorrow.

II. OUR MAIN TASK IS BUILDING A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY.

The conditions which called forth the present discussions are "the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions" and "the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard." The economic pre-requisites of revolution are here. What is lacking is the political prerequisite -- revolutionary leadership. The universal bankruptcy of other working-class parties and their proven impotence in the world crisis leaves to us sole responsibility for revolutionary leadership.

To discharge this grave responsibility the discussions pose two questions: One, how can we strengthen our party to make it the powerful vanguard of the coming American revolution? Two, how can we participate within the class struggle so as to "bridge present demands (of all the oppressed) and the socialist program of the revolution?"

First and foremost, then, our task is to build the revolutionary party -- our party. All else is subsidiary. But a revolutionary party is not built in a vacuum. It develops and grows strong by daily participation in the workers' struggles for their elementary human rights. The primary task in all our participation is not pedagogic. (We do not set ourselves up for teachers or reformers.) We are the SOCIALIST Workers Party and not a SOCIAL Workers Party. Mass movements of workers will bear no revolutionary fruit unless there is a revolutionary party to lead them. Our only justification for independent existence is this: that we only are building a revolutionary party that is able and willing to lead the workers to overthrow capitalism, seize power, and build socialism.

III. TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM IS ROAD TO REVOLUTION SO IT GETS UNIVERSAL APPROVAL
-- BUT NEW LABOR PARTY RESOLUTION CAUSES SHARP DISAGREEMENT.

The program for our participation consists of two parts. Part one is the transitional demands embodied in the draft thesis of the "Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International". Its whole function is this: To reflect today's problems and today's consciousness of wide layers of the workers and other oppressed groups, and to propose solutions "inalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power."

The slogans meet the fundamental needs of the masses. They appeal to their sense of justice. In the struggle for the demands, our party will be in the leadership. Since the demands are incompatible with capitalism, our party will actually be leading the workers forward to the inevitable conflict for power. The second part is the Labor Party resolution submitted by the Political Committee.

There has been universal agreement on the transitional demands. This is because they are so obviously linked to revolution. However there has been sharp disagreement on the Labor Party program. To grasp the cause of the disagreement, we had better analyze it.

IV. NEW LABOR PARTY RESOLUTION MARKS DRASTIC CHANGE IN ANALYSIS AND TACTICS

The new position on the labor party, which the Political Committee would introduce marks a sudden break with our present one. For three years the labor party movement has developed and shown its colors. For three years our position has been unchanged. The proposed new position marks a sudden and drastic change both in analysis and tactics.

How drastic the change is becomes clear if we compare the Declaration of Principles adopted only January, 1938 with the new position offered by the Political Committee. Our present analysis is that "the labor party movement is used by the bureaucrats to bolster up and refurbish capitalist politics, to provide a new coating to make capitalist politics palatable to the masses." The new analysis would have us believe, and tell to the workers, that the same labor party movement "represented by the L.N.P.L., must be characterized as a stage in the development of the labor party movement from complete subservience to the political parties of big capital to an independent party of the workers."

Our present tactics prescribe "Nor can the revolutionary party properly take the initiative in advocating the formation of Labor or Farmer-Labor Parties." -- although we can participate in those already formed in order to win over militants to us. The new position insists that "the problem of creating a labor party is placed upon the order of the day." It goes even further and proposes that "The Socialist Workers Party gives positive and unambiguous support to the labor party movement in general and to all its local manifestations."

Briefly stated, until now we have looked upon the labor party movement as an instrument of the labor bureaucracy to chain the workers to capitalist politics. The new position calls the chain progressive and leading in the general direction of "an independent party of the workers." Until now, we have considered that such a party, even if it were formed, would necessarily be reformist; that it was not our job to build up reformist organizations; that we must build our revolutionary organization. In fact, we considered that a revolutionary party "must strive at all times to recruit directly into its own ranks." The new position, on the other hand, gives sweeping approval to the labor party movement and promises "unambiguous support" to "all" its manifestations -- i.e. to advocate the building of a Labor Party.

This is a complete round-about-face. It is on a very important question. The change would abolish a position that has been ours for years. Changes such as these are not to be made lightly. Nevertheless, change is not excluded.

V. BUT IS THERE NEED FOR CHANGE? -- MAJORITY MUST PROVE THIS FIRST.

The Political Committee proposes the change. The burden of proving the need for the change is on their shoulders. It is for them to prove that the present position is either untrue in its analysis or inadequate in solution. It is for them to prove that they have applied it conscientiously and found it wanting. Having proved those, they must next show that there is real likelihood that the new position they propose would make us a stronger revolutionary organization. And we have every right to expect complete and cogent proof to justify the change. Where this is given, none but a dolt would refuse to welcome the change. But unless this is forthcoming, we can only label the new position as caprice and light-minded whimsy, if nothing worse. For scientific socialism is above all scientific. It is founded upon the bed-rock of fact and it always emphasizes its foundations. To the extent that we base our policy on hopes and despairs instead of facts and proof, we substitute utopian socialism for scientific socialism and opportunism for Leninism.

VI. EVASION OF PROOF IS CONFESSION OF FALSE POSITION.

Were our present position in need of change, it would be only too easy to heap fact upon fact and prove it conclusively. And those who want the change would be only too glad to do it. However, they give no proof to support them. They evade all demands for proof. The methods they use are old as politics and have always been used to disguise false politics with the mask of truth. The methods can fool only the uninitiated. We need only recognize them once and we shall be armed against them always. Let us, then, examine two of the most common ones.

VII. SAY "NEW LABOR PARTY RESOLUTION MARKS NO CHANGE" -- IN ORDER TO EVADE DEMANDS FOR PROOF.

The easiest way to avoid proof is to say that there has been no change. In which case no proof is necessary to justify it. And those who say that there has been a change in position on the Labor Party simply do not understand the new resolution. This was the gist of part of Comrade Cannon's speech at a recent membership meeting in New York dealing with the Labor Party. Were we to believe him, we might justly ask: If there is no change, why have a new resolution on the labor party? And we need only compare the new resolution with our present position to see that not only has there been a change proposed, but this change is a complete round-about-face.

VIII. CALL PRESENT POSITION ON LABOR PARTY BAD NAMES -- "ABSTRACT" etc. -- IN ORDER TO EVADE DEMANDS FOR PROOF.

Another way to slide out of proof that a change is needed is to call the present position bad names. An example is given by the majority in their resolution, where they charge that the present position repeats "abstract formulas on the question of the labor party which...had become obsolete." All science, whether of socialism or of physics, consists of formulas abstracted from reality, formulas which grasp the basic connection in material relations. The labor theory of value is one of the most abstract of abstractions and one of the mightiest abstractions in all economics. Yet no one would repudiate science and no Marxist would condemn the labor theory of value. No revolutionist worthy of the name is opposed to abstract formulas. The only pertinent charge is that the formula is "obsolete". If this is true, then change is imperative. But that it is true remains to be proven, and no amount of repetition can substitute for proof.

IX. ONLY TWO WAYS POSSIBLE TO PROVE THE PRESENT POSITION "OBSOLETE" -- BUT MAJORITY CANNOT PROVE THE FIRST AND DARE NOT TRY TO PROVE THE SECOND.

The present labor party position can be proven "obsolete" in one of two ways. One way would be to say that the present formulation was correct when it was written but that conditions have changed. Changed conditions require a new formulation to meet them. But have conditions changed in any way not predicted by the present position? Certainly not. And that is the very reason why they never go into a concrete comparison between past and present conditions in the labor party movement. Or the majority must say that conditions have not changed fundamentally but that the present analysis and the tactics based on it for the last three years have been entirely wrong. This they would not dare attempt to prove. If they could prove it, it would show that three years of blundering with the labor party movement were necessary before they awoke to the fact that their position was wrong. This would indicate a degree of political blindness that would completely incapacitate them for leadership. Fortunately for the party, they have not been wrong for the past three years. Unfortunately for the party, they seem anxious to repeat their former correctness by committing today the errors they avoided yesterday.

X. UNASSAILABLE CORRECTNESS OF THE PRESENT LABOR PARTY POSITION CONSTITUTES STRENGTH OF THE MAJORITY

In the unassailable correctness of the present position lies the strength of the minority. It points out with real force that the present analysis is absolutely vindicated by events. It insists that what is lacking is not the position but the full application of the position. The position is not wrong but the failure to carry it out fully is. And Comrades Draper, Capolis and others propose concrete measure to remedy this.

XI. ARGUMENTS FOR THE NEW LABOR PARTY POSITION ARE EITHER "ADVENTURISTIC" OR FALSE.

Were this merely a scientific discussion in revolutionary politics, there would be no need to write further. Those who want a change have not shown the present policy wrong. They have not established the need for change. At the same time, the present position has stood the test of years of personal experience in the United States and decades of historical experience in Europe. We would not even bother to glance at the reasons for a new labor party position.

We cannot stop here in the present discussion. For majority spokesmen bedeck their position with attractive looking theoretical garments. True the garments are of tinsel. They will attract the naive, the gullible, and those who are ever on the side of novelty and change so long as it be painted in rosy hues and given the impressive voice of high authority. However, the theory cannot stand the test of close scrutiny. And we better scrutinize now, than regret later.

We need waste no time on the type of theory which bases itself upon the fact that there is a mass movement for a labor party. Comrade Crux has aptly described these spokesmen. "To begin with this mentality as the fundamental fact would signify not a scientific but a conjunctural, demagogic, or adventurist policy." Nor need we stop to consider the arguments of those who would fly in the face of the whole history of the working-class by saying that the labor party is potentially revolutionary and use this as a reason for advocating its formation. Suffice it to say that these do not have

the audacity to embalm their political decay in a signed article. The first argument indicates sheer opportunism. The second indicates complete bankruptcy. And both shed a glaring light upon a position which requires such arguments to support it.

The only two arguments worth considering are: First, that the new labor party position is based on and flows from the transitional demands. Second, that the formation of a labor party is progressive and objectively necessary. The second argument has been partly answered by Comrade Draper in Bulletin #6. But the question cuts deep into the marrow of revolutionary tactics and requires more extended analysis. Politically speaking, what are the symptoms or criteria of progressivism? What acts or movements are progressive today? What should be the relation between a revolutionary organization and a workers' movement travelling in a progressive direction? A middle class movement travelling in a progressive direction? These are general questions posed by the labor party discussion. They will be posed ever more sharply as the conflict for power approaches nearer. Far better that we thresh them out today while there is time and freedom. However, this argument can better be treated in the New International than here. It would take up too much space in the present article. Moreover it is subsidiary to what is the most important question facing the party: the relation between the transitional demands and the labor party.

XII. PRESENT DISCUSSION MAY MARK A TURNING POINT IN OUR PARTY.

Upon our answer may well depend the future of our party and the fate of the American revolution.

Until now, the party has gone through a process of absorbing or destroying all parties competing with us for the support of class-conscious workers. That task has been finished. There are no more to absorb or destroy. Now alternatives offer themselves. Either we destroy ourselves as a revolutionary party and absorb ourselves into another organization. Or we forge ahead, rooting our party in the living movements of workers and oppressed, attracting militants to us by our program, our discipline, and our revolutionary integrity.

The present discussion may well be the starting point for two tendencies in our party, each groping for one of the alternatives. And the transitional program the point of demarcation.

Everybody agrees, at least in words, with the transitional demands as formulated in the Draft Thesis. The question is: What political organization shall put the demands before the masses? The answer to this question may be bringing the tendencies into the open.

The majority looks to the labor party to put the transitional demands before the workers. It advocates "unambiguous support" to the labor party movement. The minority looks only to our own party to put the transitional demands before the workers. It advocates "unambiguous support" only to the Socialist Workers' Party.

Is the transitional program simply a "transitional excuse" for liquidation into the labor party? Some are already voicing the question. True, the majority constantly minimizes our numbers, constantly stresses our isolation and impotence, and constantly paints such glowing pictures of our future in the labor party which no sober, responsible politician would ever dream of. These might be considered as ideological preparation of the membership for the move or they may be simply glowing advertising for the new labor party.

position. Whatever their real meaning, they arouse suspicion and doubts. The minority position and program leaves no room for doubts or suspicions. It recognizes our immaturity and it would forge the transitional demands into weapons with which to outgrow it; with which to get workers into our party; with which to speed up our development and increase our strength.

The importance of the present discussion looms even greater when we examine the two positions on the relation between transitional demands and the labor party.

XIII. MAJORITY POSITION: -- "NEW LABOR PARTY POSITION FLOWS FROM TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS."

Outstanding spokesmen for the new position have stated unequivocally that to advocate a labor party by itself, divorced from the transitional demands is sheer opportunism. That is why they were against it before. However, today they advocate the labor party because it flows directly from the transitional demands. Just as the demands push the workers toward the seizure of power, so will the labor party when advocated in conjunction with the transitional demands. This is the position in its most favorable light.

XIV. MINORITY POSITION: -- "NEW LABOR PARTY POSITION IS ENTIRELY INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS."

The answer of the spokesmen for the present position is that the majority is right to this extent: advocating a labor party apart from the transitional demands is sheer opportunism. However, THE TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS ARE NO REASON FOR ADVOCATING THE LABOR PARTY. Quite the contrary. THE LABOR PARTY IS IN DIRECT CONTRADICTION TO THE WHOLE SPIRIT AND DIRECTION OF THE TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS. For individual labor parties already exist. They do not have the transitional demands for their program. TO ADVOCATE THE LABOR PARTY WOULD BE TO ADVOCATE LABOR PARTIES ENTIRELY DIVORCED FROM TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS. By THEIR OWN ADMISSION, THIS IS SHEER OPPORTUNISM. Armed with the transitional demands we can function effectively within the political movements of the workers -- but only if we keep the present position on the labor party. Unless we do this, THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM WILL SERVE AS A JUSTIFICATION AND CLOAK FOR WHAT MAY WELL BECOME UNBRIDLED OPPORTUNISM.

XV. DOES THE LABOR PARTY FLOW FROM THE TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS? -- CRUX SAYS NO.

The question comes to this: Does the labor party flow logically from, and is it integrally related to, the transitional demands? If it does, the majority position is strengthened by the strength inherent in the transitional demands. If it does not, its already weak foundation is completely destroyed.

Presumably, the best witness to prove that the new position on the labor party DOES or DOES NOT flow from the transitional demands is Comrade Crux.

*** In the Second Bulletin, page 44, he says "The Labor Party proposal is not a part of the program of transitional demands but is a special motion." The words are definite and unequivocal. All can see except those who "would not see". And why is it "not a part of the program?" Because it is incompatible with the transitional demands. And why is it a "special motion?" Because it is in head-on contradiction with the transitional demands.

XVI. NEW LABOR PARTY WATERS DOWN THE TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS.

Those who accept the new Labor Party position either do not under-

see Ed. Note:-- For Comrade Crux's opinion on the connection

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stand the current social crisis; or they do not understand the applicability of the transitional demands; or if they do understand the applicability, they are forced to water them down in order to fit their Labor Party pattern. For, if they are to get the Labor Party to put forth the transitional demands, they have to water them down. Not even the most extreme optimist believes that the Labor Party would take up the transitional demands for its program. The majority has therefore watered down the transitional demands to suit their position. But what if the Labor Party does not accept the watered transitional demands? The majority will water them down to half. And what if it does not accept half? Then the majority will water them to a quarter, or to nothing at all. We need only compare the masterful statement of the transitional demands and the castrated form they take in the majority resolution to see that the Labor Party and the transitional demands do not mix well. And this castrated version is only the first of many waterings that will ultimately drown and bury the transitional demands. Witness even now, Comrade Goldman's statement in Bulletin no. 6 "Not that we make it an absolute condition for our support of a Labor Party that it adopt our transitional demands..." Already the transitional demands have been watered down to zero and the Labor Party support emerges without the cloak which so attracted the gullible, the transitional demands.

However, there is no need for quoting authorities. Let us compare the essence of the Labor Party and the transitional demands; the whole direction of motion of the Labor Party and the transitional demands. Then we can judge for ourselves whether or not the Labor Party is at all compatible with the transitional demands.

XVII. TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS LEAD TO SOVIETS AS THE ORGANIZATIONAL FORM OF THE STATE POWER OF THE WORKERS.

The essence of the transitional demands is this: They are demands which are incompatible with capitalism. They are demands which put the workers and farmers into extr-parliamentary struggles against capitalism and the government. They are demands transitional to the revolution and socialism through the instrumentality of Soviets. Factory committees and workers' defense groups within the trade union movement are to form the basis of organized dual power. Gigantic public works programs and workers' control are to unite both workers and unemployed in bonds of economic solidarity whose demands can never be satisfied under capitalism. Committees of prices are to extend this unity to include the oppressed dirt farmers and oppressed lower middle class. The crowning slogan for these transitional demands is the soviets, which bind all oppressed elements into local units centering around the factory committees. As the class struggle reaches an openly revolutionary stage, these soviets will become the basis for a more general united front of all oppressed. The soviets will become the competitors and opponents first of local authorities and then of the central government.

The essence and direction of motion of the transitional demands, then, lead "inalterably" to revolution. The hard-headed and realistic application of the transitional demands to the present period of social crisis both strengthens our own party for its task of leadership and prepares the workers for the revolutionary tasks before them.

XVIII. LABOR PARTY FULLFILLS ITSELF IN A LABOR GOVERNMENT -- AS THE ORGANIZATIONAL FORM WHICH SUPPRESSES THE SOVIETS.

And what of the Labor Party? The essence of the Labor Party is to accept the limits of capitalism and to work within its class-political relations only on the parliamentary arena. But the decline of capitalism forces the workers to challenge the contracting limits. The workers must demolish them or strangle themselves within them. During these struggles, the Labor Party may seek to remain neutral in order not to antagonize its working-class base. It cannot do so for long. The class-struggle respects no tight-rope walkers. It confronts the Labor Party with the same alternatives as everyone else: Either for, or against, capitalism. For it to oppose capitalism would be contrary to the very forces which dominate it. The Labor Party, true to itself, accepts capitalism and fights to save it -- no matter against whom the fight may lead.

The fact is that saving capitalism can only be at the expense of the workers and unemployed, the dirt farmers and the oppressed middle class. For the way to save capitalism is to increase its profits, which are its very life-blood. But under capitalist decline this can be done in only two ways: 1) Within the limits of the national economy, by cutting the wages of workers in private industry and reducing the wages and relief budgets of unemployed who depend upon government aid. This can be done only by making the workers feel impotent in the face of capitalist decline so that they would accept the decoy heaped upon them. 2) On an international scale, by supporting the capitalists as they reach out for foreign markets and new sources of profits.

The type of state power which crowns the Labor Party is a Labor Government. Whether it does or does not take state power, the role of the Labor Party will be essentially the same. All that will vary will be the degree. For as the internal crisis bursts forth into civil war the Labor Party maintains a "benevolent neutrality" towards the capitalist class. But as the revolutionary crisis grows, it becomes the labor wing of the capitalist class and their most effective weapon in crushing the revolution. And as the external crisis bursts forth into imperialist war, the Labor Party also drives the workers into the trenches in defense of "their" imperialist bandits. The result of both crises can only mean fascism in the United States.

XIX. LABOR PARTY AND TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS ARE INCOMPATIBLE.

The fundamental conflict between transitional demands and the new Labor Party position should now be obvious even to the most superficial observer. The whole direction of the Labor Party reaches completion when it suppresses the workers as they try to seize power during a period of crisis. The whole direction and law of motion of the transitional demands is to prepare the workers both organizationally and psychologically for the conquest of power. What distinguished the Bolsheviks from the Mensheviks was precisely this basic point. The Bolsheviks took the Soviets as their central slogan and orientated daily activity towards it. The Mensheviks gave Soviets lip-service only. The two were incompatible in theory. The October Revolution proved them incompatible in practice.

XX. NEW LABOR PARTY POSITION WOULD ENDANGER THE REVOLUTIONARY UNITY OF OUR PARTY IN THE COMING STRUGGLE FOR POWER.

The period of crisis will find the Labor Party and the rising Soviets in growing conflict. As the chasm between them grows with the conflict, it will necessarily reflect itself within our own party. We will become a party divided against itself. One leg will be in the Labor Party to which we are to give "unambiguous support." The other leg will be in the Soviets, giving them equally "unambiguous support." The conflict between the Soviets and the Labor Party will divide the party into two sections. As it widens, so will the sections within the party move further away from each other. We will not be able to sit astride both Soviets and Labor Party. The party will split, one part going with the transitional demands and the Soviets and the other going with the Labor Party and the counter-revolution. Either this, or we will be weakened to impotence and the workers' revolution will go down to defeat -- shattered by the very Labor Party which we ourselves advocated and helped build.

XXI. FAILURE OF THE REVOLUTION WILL BRING IN A TERRIBLE FASCISM.

Let no one minimize the dire effects of unsuccessful revolution. The whole tradition of American class struggles is woven through with a violence that is unequalled anywhere in the European countries. The failure of revolution will let loose a wave of suppression that will make Hitlerism look like a pink tea party. But the very same tradition of violence, when harnessed to the transitional demands, will sweep us into power. The blunt, forceful, and violent traditions of the American working-class is the true basis of the coming revolution. Bind it to the futile, disillusioning Labor Party and the working-class will turn to the more active, more aggressive, more outspoken, and more gaudily attractive features of incipient fascism.

XXII. MAJORITY SPOKESMEN CANNOT HONESTLY SHIRK THEIR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FAILURE OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE RISE OF FASCISM.

Those who advocate the Labor Party cannot, if they are honest with themselves and with others, avoid the responsibility for the role the Labor Party would have in driving militant workers from faith in labor politics generally because Labor Party politics can achieve nothing for them. Nor can they shirk responsibility when the Labor Party they advocate contributes to the smashing of the coming American revolution. That this will be its role is verified by all history. And it matters not at all what the reason is for advocating the Labor Party.

Those who advocate the Labor Party without transitional demands will be responsible for its actions.

Those who advocate the Labor Party with transitional demands will be responsible for its actions.

Those who advocate the Labor Party because the social crisis will bring "tumultuous" changes of such a nature that the Labor Party will, so to speak, be swallowed up by the earthquake of class struggle, will also have to bear responsibility.

To say that the Labor Party will have a short and tempestuous existence as the reason for advocating it now is to deceive oneself and others. Political parties do not rise and disappear when their economic or "progressive" tasks are ended. They remain long afterward as weights upon the workers, dragging them down into the bog of confusion and reaction. The blows of declining capitalism will destroy the faith of some in the Labor Party but it will also drive the party faster to the right as a bulwark of reaction within the working-class. Comrade Shaughtman may complain that if the Labor Party were a little bit more radical it would get more members. But the essence of the Labor Party is that it functions within the limits of capitalism. It cannot be radical when capitalism is declining. It must become increasingly reactionary. We have seen this to develop. From supporting Democrats, to supporting Republicans, to supporting ---. What capitalists party next? But it always supports capitalism. And it will help crush the workers who challenge the system.

Those who advocate the Labor Party because they are intoxicated with the gibberish that starts off with "It is not excluded that..." will also bear their burden of responsibility for the Labor Party's role. And those who just follow the prevailing stream, and vote with the majority no matter what, will also be responsible for the Labor Party action.

XXIII. TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS ARE THE ONLY ROAD TO REVOLUTION.

The transitional program leads to revolution. The Labor Party leads to impotence and defeat. Herein is the basic contradiction between transitional demands and the Labor Party. There can be no happy marriage between transitional demands and the Labor Party just as there can be none between plus and minus; black and white. Our party cannot fight for both equally. It must emphasize one and make the other subsidiary. The majority subordinates the transitional demands to the Labor Party. The minority subordinates the Labor Party into just another arena for the transitional demands.

XXIV. UNDIVIDED LOYALTY AND "UNAMBIGUOUS SUPPORT" TO OUR OWN PARTY ARE THE ONLY GUARANTEES OF REVOLUTIONARY CONQUEST OF POWER.

There can be no divided loyalties for a revolutionist. He cannot give "unambiguous support" to the Labor's Non-Partisan League, on the one hand, and the Socialist Workers' Party on the other. Membership in the party means undivided, "unambiguous loyalty to our party alone. The transitional program is the only basis for this loyalty. It is a program for building our party. The New Labor Party proposal of the majority wants to advocate the Labor Party, and to build it. It shifts our "unambiguous support" from our own party to the Labor Party. That is the meaning of the new position.

Our duty is now plain before us. We must repudiate the majority position on the Labor Party. First, there is no need for change. Second, the change is of a character which arouses doubts as to the future of the party. Third, the change would put us in motion to advocate a party and type of action which is certain to lead to defeat of the workers. Fourth, the change

would weaken, if not destroy, the basic revolutionary significance of the transitional demands. Fifth, the change would give "unambiguous support" to a party other than our own and would result in divided loyalty.

But this is not enough. More remains to be done. We must orient ourselves thoroughly and concretely about the transitional demands. We must pound them out day after day, whenever the appropriate opportunity arises. We must show the workers in no uncertain terms that we know their problems; that we know how to solve them; that we are determined to do it; that the transitional demands, which are so obviously adequate and just can only be fulfilled by the overthrow of capitalism and the institution of socialism; that we are unswerving in our determination to take power and put through the solutions; that we alone are willing and able to take power in the name of the workers.

That is the whole perspective. It may sound unreal to some of the spokesmen for the Labor Party. But that is simply because they neither understand the transitional demands nor the depths of the current crisis. Both these considerations make this perspective the only revolutionary one. The tone in which we put forth our demands -- the words and phrases which we use -- these are tactical matters to be adjusted to the needs of the situation. But the demands must be put forth as long as the social crisis in American life continues. And in pushing the demands, the party will lead the masses to revolution.

The time to orient the party for power is now. Let us begin.

TWO WIDESPREAD MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE LABOR PARTY

Jack Cope

In all the arguments against the resolution on the labor party two erroneous ideas stand out: That we are abandoning our opposition to reformism; that the question of whether or not there will be a labor party in the U.S. will be answered by the subjective factor of the Socialist Workers Party decision.

Both Draper and Trimble give expression to the first. Draper in his article and Trimble in the branch discussion. To Trimble it appears that we are not aware of what we are doing. He warned he says that "we intend to go into a reformist party." (my emphasis - J.C.) And this means, he continues, that we must "submerge our own banner." we cannot build both the Socialist Workers Party and the Labor Party at the same time. Either or -- we will either devote all our energies to building the first or abandon that project in order to turn our attention to the second. Draper on his part declares: "But a Marxist workers party cannot 'go along' with the masses at the cost of tabling its political ideas." (again my emphasis - J.C.)

In his review of "Engels' Letters to Kautsky" (New International, June, 1936) Trotsky writes: "Engels gives a classic definition which shows the difference between a vivifying and a lifeless abstraction: 'Marx reduces the common content in things and relations to its most universal conceptual expression; his abstraction consequently reproduces in concept form the content already lodged in things themselves. Rodbertus, on the other hand, creates for himself a more or less imperfect mental expression and measures all things by his concept, to which they must be equated.' (P. 144) Nine-tenths of the errors in human thinking are embraced in this formula."

It is precisely this formula which embraces the errors of Draper and Trimble. In their heads they have two bright shiny categories: on the one hand, reformism, betrayal of the working class etc.; on the other, Marxism, Fourth Internationalism, loyalty to the revolution, etc. These categories "more or less imperfect" mental expression of the real world are for them mutually exclusive. But if we try to "reproduce in concept form the content already lodged in things themselves" we have an entirely different story.

First of all the movement toward a labor party while reformist in form is essentially a movement away from the influence of the capitalist class -- is consequently progressive, a step toward proletarian political class consciousness, and for that reason should be encouraged, speeded up and organized. Secondly, the Socialist Workers Party itself is not some abstract equivalent of perfection which has fallen from the sky but only a more advanced expression of this same movement. To turn aside from this movement and not try to stand at the front of it and help it to catch up with the vanguard would be to abandon -- for a time at least -- our role of vanguard for that of innocent bystander.

As for the second misconception, that a labor party can be created by a decision of the Socialist Workers Party, this was expressed over and over in the arguments against the labor party resolution. These comrades argue that there are no signs of a labor party being built; that if we "create" such a party we will be contributing to the reformist illusions of the masses; that we must not "impose or superimpose a labor party on the masses" etc.

To put the question in this way is to stand materialism on its head. We can no more "create" a labor party than we could have "created" the CIO. For years the revolutionary movement of the U.S. called for the organization of the unorganized into industrial unions. But nothing happened. Not until the 1929-34 depression had brought the American workers face to face with the necessity of fulfilling this task was it accomplished. And conversely, when this did happen all the betrayals of the A.F. of L. bureaucracy, all the obstacles placed in their way by the fakors and the employers could not stop this profound mass movement which went far beyond the goal set for it by its most far-sighted leaders. (the sit-down).

So it was with the CIO. So it will be with the labor party. We cannot create it we can only establish its probability and its character and orient our own activities accordingly. The fact that millions of workers have affiliated to Labors' Non-Partisan League should be indicative enough of a growing turn toward independent labor politics on the part of the American working class. But even if this were not yet visible there would still be reason for such an orientation. All the pre-requisites for such a development are present in abundance. The decline of American Capitalism has forced the vanguard of the American working class into economic organization (the CIO) but no sooner are they organized than these workers find their recent gains and many of their former conditions being wiped out by still another decline, more precipitous, more profound, more disasterous than the first. History has placed before this working class a set of problems that can only be solved on the political field of the class struggle. Is it likely that this class, which has come so far in so short a time, will refuse to pick up the gauntlet thrown down to it by the thoroughly rotten, decadent and completely bankrupt capitalist class which still guides the destiny of the American masses?

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE LABOR PARTY

1. The question of a Labor Party has been placed before the SWP by the international and national leadership as a corollary of its transitional demands involving a revision of the former position of our tendency. In the past we stated that we would not advocate or lay the foundation for a labor party, but would probably participate in one if it were formed. It is now proposed that we take the initiative in urging the formation of a labor party, out of the present "movement" for a labor party, that we "break the resistance" of the trade union bureaucrats to the formation of a labor party, with a view to "pushing it on the road to independent political action", while at the same time we "do not and will not take any responsibility for this party."

2. If the SWP is to carry out its revolutionary tasks, it must reject these proposals and take a clean-out position against the building, aiding and advocacy of the labor party. It must fight the labor party as a reformist party, which cannot be "independent" of the bourgeoisie, and counterpose to it the building of the revolutionary party and international. Its trade union activities, fraction work inside the labor party, and general political line must be orientated toward the destruction of labor party influence over the masses and the building and strengthening of the influence of revolutionary Marxism.

3. Not one of the arguments advanced by the pro-labor party element in the SWP holds water; not one of the crucial criticisms against this line has been answered.

a. The labor party is presented to the SWP membership as a transitional or partial demand, which reflects the desires of masses of workers, and which can mobilize them for independent political action, and through that for revolutionary action, on condition that revolutionists participate in it.

The use of partial demands by revolutionists is an integral part of the theory and practice of Bolshevism. But not in all cases where the masses are following a certain slogan do the revolutionists support it. Examples are the Bolshevik position against revolutionary defensism in March 1917, against pacifism even in war-time, against the Hilquit amendment for the expropriation of capitalism by constitutional amendment, against the recent anti-war Congress at Washington. Evidently there are partial demands and partial demands. The revolutionists apply criteria to each such slogan: Will it facilitate the independence, the initiative, the class struggle will of the proletariat? Only then is it really progressive, and we support it. Or will the fight for this slogan subordinate the workers to the bourgeoisie, lead them into class-collaboration? Then it is reactionary, and no matter how it may appeal to masses of workers at a given moment, it will eventually disappoint and demoralize them, and discredit those who have advocated such a slogan.

Marx in 1864 pointed out the value for the class development of the English proletariat of 20 years of struggle for the Ten-Hour Day and universal suffrage. Today such transitional methods of struggle as the sit-down strike, workers' militia, workers' control of production, are partial slogans which develop the initiative, the leadership and the class struggle will of the workers.

But the Labor Party? It is fundamentally a reformist party - by its program, its structure, its functioning, its composition and its leadership.

The slogan of "Fight to build a reformist party" is a slogan of subordinating the class struggle to class collaboration, the proletarian leadership to that of the bourgeoisie. As such it is a reactionary, not a progressive demand.

b. The advocates of the new orientation try to justify their position by the developing objective crisis and its revolutionary potentialities. But this is precisely what makes the labor party perspective utterly hopeless. If the objective situation today bore any resemblance to the pre-war epoch of relative social peace, in which the British Labor Party and German Social Democracy grew up, a labor party orientation might be no more excusable but at least understandable. Lenin's analysis of the growth of the British Labor Party was in terms of the super-profits of British imperialism; Trotsky's own analysis of the German Social-Democracy in the post-war period was that its growth and stabilization paralleled the relative stabilization of capitalism, and that its decline took place as the (relative) crisis began to sharpen after 1929.

Now for the first time, in 1938, we are taught that the sharp- or the crisis the more room for the development of reformism in the labor movement. On what is it to feed? Will capitalism give more concessions or will it take away concessions already wrested from it by the proletariat?

If it is argued that precisely because capitalism cannot give concessions, the labor party becomes against its will an anti-capitalist force, we ask, since when Marxists believe that capitalism can be fought without consciousness in the political field? Trotsky has pointed out more than once that the history of Marxism is strewn with the efforts of opportunists to leave everything to the "historic process", to the automatic, un-conscious, "implicitly revolutionary" response of the working class to the needs of the class struggle.

We answer: Precisely the growing objective crisis calls for the independent conscious revolutionary party leading the proletariat in action; precisely the labor party in which revolutionary elements may be entrapped will be helpless to fight capitalism in the period of crisis, and will only block the road of the proletariat when objective conditions put the question of power on the order of the day.

The same argument was presented four years ago for the entry into Social-Democracy. "Fascism is around the corner - we must not find ourselves isolated when it comes". The reformist parties in a period of approaching fascism not only do not afford a shelter for revolutionists, but even throw out contrists - SAF in 1932, Pivot 1938. The same unprincipled arguments led to the same un-Marxist conclusions.

The rationalization which lead Comrade Trotsky into the 2nd International remains in print - never repudiated. But life has torn that analysis to tatters. Wherever this line was acted on, it lead to dilution, despair and confusion. Only philistines can talk of numerical gains. What our entry succeeded in doing was to reinvigorate the decadent 2nd International and prevent the leftward moving elements from joining us. It is time to learn as De Leon taught long ago that one cannot make a battleship from a boat constructed to be an excursion steamer or that no amount of pruning and grafting will allow a sour apple tree to bear oranges.

c. The labor party spokesmen in our ranks give a distorted picture of the present as well as the past of the American labor movement, in order to convince the uninformed that there is a brand-new situation which

requires brand-new "tactics", in reality, not new tactics at all but a break with Marxist principle.

We are told: "The LNPL represents a profound departure from the old Gompers school of labor politics". Answer: Gompers supported first one bourgeois party, then another; now the LNPL supports only one; but this is hardly a profound difference.

We are told: "In the 1936 presidential elections....we have seen for the first time a systematic and increasingly determined effort to organize and mobilize the political strength of the workers as a single unit". Answer: Look up the record of the National Labor Union Party of 1869, the Labor Party of Illinois of 1873; the Independent Party of 1876, the Greenback Labor Party of 1886, the United Labor Party of 1887, the Union Labor Party of 1887, the People's Party of 1891, all the way down to the LaFollette movement of 1924 with the railroad brotherhoods and Socialist Party participating. These were mass movements, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of workers, based on workers' organizations, with a reformist program, giving electoral support to bourgeois candidates.

Not only is the labor party nothing new in the American movement, but on the very contrary, it has a long and disgraceful record of bankruptcy behind it, and the current movement, the latest one in a long series, differs in no important respect from its predecessors.

Finally, even if it were true that this is a new phenomenon in the American labor movement, it would still be reformist, class-collaborationist to the core, and a blind alley for the working class.

d. The argument that to stay out of the labor party means sectarian isolation from the masses is nothing more nor less than the People's Frontist argument against revolutionary action. It proposes to approach the masses from the rear, as a tail-end. The real isolation of revolutionists from the masses results from the chase after the opportunists and reformist leaders while turning their backs on the real interests of the masses.

It is time to draw the lesson of the bankruptcy of the POUM. They also, from fear of isolation, took the opportunist road to the masses: they also fought the People's Front on paper, and collaborated with it in practice; they also preferred to maneuver with the reformist and anarchist leaders instead of leading the masses of workers against these leaders. As a result, when the crisis came to a head, they found themselves really isolated from the masses.

4. We have not yet stated the fundamental reasons why the labor party is opportunism, why it is a break with Marxist principle; so far we have only demonstrated that the proponents of the new line have not been able to present a single sound justification for their position.

We have to state now that the labor party and the farmer-labor are precisely what the Stalinists call them, the American expression of the People's Front. Second, that the labor party line is in fact and in principle, the line of liquidation of the revolutionary party and of Bolshevism.

Although this labor party is to be partly at least of our handiwork, we verbally disengage ourselves of responsibility for it. The responsibility is inescapable. Here too we remain revolutionary in word and reformist in deed.

a. We have described the labor movement, present as well as its American predecessors, as a mass movement, based on workers organizations usually giving electoral support to bourgeois candidates on a class-collaborationist program. But the people's front is nothing else -- as our tendency has pointed out, it is not a new policy, but only a new name for the old social-democratic policy of coalition and collaboration. The decisive thing is the class character of the program, not the name nor the social composition of the organizations that support it. History has shown us again and again labor organizations supporting a bourgeois program. The working class did not take power when MacDonald or Blum became premiers, irrespective of the "Labour Party" or Socialist Party label, or working class following. In this country the ALP will be no more "independent" of the bourgeoisie if it nominates Hillman than if it supports Lehman. The People's Front character of the policies for which it is organized, that is, the maintenance of capitalism through reforms, determines the character of the labor party.

There is no more place for revolutionists in a labor party than in any other form of people's front, that is to say, they cannot use a counter-revolutionary instrument for revolutionary purposes. We fight the centrist confusion of "revolutionary people's front", or "people's front of action"; the Stalinist trap of the "democratic people's army", and the reformist illusionism about the utilization of the bourgeois state for proletarian purposes. So with the labor party, it is an apparatus built for certain purposes, the subordination of the proletariat to bourgeois politics, that is, for the political purposes of the People's Front, and it cannot be utilized for advancing the revolutionary movement.

It was no coincidence, but political necessity, that forced the Stalinists to support the labor party from 1923 to 1927, when their general line was opportunistic, abandon the slogan during the leftist "third period", and take it up again since 1935, as an inseparable part of the People's Front line of the Seventh Congress.

b. The labor party line means the liquidation of the revolutionary party, and therefore of all revolutionary perspective, irrespective of the subjective wishes or intentions of those who advocate it.

The motivation for the line as given by the Plenum resolution is the following: "Before the crisis of 1929, and even later, until the appearance of the CIO, we could have hoped that the revolutionary, that is, the Bolshevik party would develop in the US parallel to the radicalization of the working class and succeed eventually in becoming the head of it." Those hopes are now given up. The abandonment of this perspective, even "eventually", is the reason explicitly given for the new position on the labor party.

The next sentence goes on to say, "Under these conditions, (i.e., hope for a revolutionary party at the head of the masses before 1929-1935,) it would have been absurd to occupy oneself with abstract propaganda in favor of an unheralded "Labor Party". Then they had hope for a revolutionary party and considered the Labor Party question abstract; today, they regard the labor party movement as genuine, and give up hope for the revolutionary party.

In exchange for a revolutionary party, they have taken up the perspective of a left wing in the labor party, carrying out a loyal opposition to Lovestone, Thomas, the Old Guard S.P., and the C.P., presenting the transitional program of the Fourth International as "good 'revolutionary' labor partyites", under the discipline and within the program of

the labor party.

This perspective is no less liquidationist if a part, particularly the leadership, of the SWP, stays out of the labor party, and maintains a press, conducts a few meetings, and carries on abstract Fourth International propaganda, while the actual participation of the former SWP members in the class struggle takes place under direction of the reformist labor party. The party might continue to talk revolution but its action would necessarily be reformist, being limited to what the ALP bureaucrats will allow. This means the most thoroughgoing divorce of theory from practice.

The line of the so-called "independent" organization remaining outside of the ALP would be determined by the needs of the ex-SWP caucus inside the ALP. It would in reality therefore not be an independent organization, but would be politically subordinated to the ALP via the so-called "left-wing". It is therefore correct to speak of this policy as one of liquidation.

5. The NEC resolution implies, though it does not state, that the transitional labor party (or farmer-labor party) in its fight for transitional demands will become the road to a transitional "workers' and farmers" government". This anti-Marxist concept of the two-class government, like the two-class party, must be rejected on principle. However, this important question is a separate matter, and can be dealt with better in a separate document.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The SWP must reaffirm the first of the Eleven Principles of the Left Opposition, "the political and organizational independence of the revolutionary party at all times and under all conditions". Without this, no principled fight against the labor party is possible.

2. The SWP must fundamentally revise its position on the labor party in the Declaration of Principles, which has made possible the present proposals of the NC. These proposals are, word for word, "the SWP gives positive and unambiguous support to the labor party movement in general and to all of its local manifestations." It must reject on principle the advocacy, building or support of the labor party.

3. In the unions and other mass organizations, the SWP must fight against affiliation to the labor party, as participation in bourgeois politics. It must counterpose to it, the only independent party of the working class, the revolutionary party. If the union does affiliate, the members will of course not break from the union, but stay with the workers, accepting thereby collective membership in the LP, and patiently explain to the workers on the basis of their real experience how the LP does not and cannot fight for their interests but only can and must betray them. In this way, the fight against the LP becomes part of the revolutionary struggle against bureaucracy and for class struggle line and democracy in the unions. Unionists who find themselves in this way inside the LP will fight for such transitional slogans as workers' control of production, workers' militia, etc. (and on the concrete transitional slogans the proposals of the PC need drastic revision.)

4. Outside of the unions, open exposure and intransigent criticism of the LP by the SWP combined with the work of fractions inside the membership branches of the LP, directed toward exposing the "progressive" and "independent" bluff of the ALP, and toward breaking it up and preventing it from influencing the working class. United front activities including the electoral field, can be a useful weapon to the work of exposure and disintegration.

AGAINST THE ADVOCACY OR BUILDING OF THE LABOR PARTY!
THE LABOR PARTY LINE IS THE LIQUIDATION OF THE LINE OF BUILDING
THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY! THE ONLY INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS
PARTY IS THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY! THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY MUST BE SAFEGUARDED AT ALL TIMES AND UNDER
ALL CONDITIONS!

Submitted by Louisville Local.

FOR INDEPENDENT LABOR POLITICAL ACTION: a Transitional Slogan

The economic and social crisis which is raging with devastating consequence to class relationships is at last breaking the workers from the domination of the capitalist political parties toward independent political action. This process can find its full realization only in the entry of the masses of workers and farmers into the ranks of the SWP which can lead them to power and to socialism. This goal can be attained, if the SWP and its members become the leaders of the break from the two party system and are ready to share in the experience of the masses pushing them forward step by step from one stage of development to the next. Only by such a process will we be able to prevent the workers from experiencing permanent disorientation in the ranks of a people's front party, a labor party, or in a return to a revitalised two party system.

At present the two main streams into which this movement has been channelized are the movement toward a people's front party and that toward a labor party. And it is our task now, no matter what strategy or tactic we may adopt toward these main currents to tell the masses what these parties will be and what they will do.

THE PEOPLE'S FRONT PARTY

The people's front party will be a class collaborationist melange of petty politicians, small shopkeepers, whitecollar workers, and workers with a non-working class philosophy and program and will be at the very best a continuation on the left of the present day Roosevelt politics. Its immediate task will be to corral the militancy of the workers on the economic and political field and prepare them to support the coming war. It will prevent them from attaining their full class consciousness and tie them to the bourgeois state with more ties than the two traditional bourgeois parties could ever muster in the revolutionary struggles that will dominate the coming period.

THE LABOR PARTY

A labor party will definitely break the workers from the two capitalist parties and will really give them the experience of political independence and will increase the class consciousness of the entire working class but it will inevitably be forced to carry out a program not essentially different from that of the people's front party. Made up of the broad masses of the workers through their unions but led and represented by the petty aristocrats of labor without any social vision it will be torn with contradictions but unquestionably it will carry out an opportunist policy, a policy of peaceful parliamentarism which will sap the vitality and militancy of the movement which brought it into being. It will tie the workers to reformist ideas and to the bourgeois state through these ideas and will inevitably be one of the chief instruments through which capitalists will tie the workers to the military machine in the next war. Its class collaborationist activities on the economic field will have a discouraging and disillusioning effect on the growth and militancy of the struggles of the workers.

There is no question but that if our party were to be confronted by a people's front or a labor party it would have to maintain an intransigent opposition to its philosophy and actions. It would be prepared to hold its banner high at the front of the most militant workers and to advance

an independent revolutionary program to answer the immediate problems of the workers movement in opposition to the half-way, opportunist, answers of the reformist party. We would be prepared to expose their cheap machinations and betrayals and point out their lessons to the workers in the ranks of this movement, and thus bring the most militant and revolutionary workers to our party.

However, at present we are not faced with reformist parties which must be fought, but with a movement toward class-consciousness which is now expressed by the elemental gropings of the masses toward independent political action in the form of a people's front party and a labor party. Toward this movement we must take a stand which will not isolate us but which will make this groping for political action result in class consciousness which is the first prerequisite to our socialist propaganda and to a socialist consciousness. The greater number of workers is found not in the camp of the movement for the labor party but rather in the people's front tendency. Against this latter movement we must maintain an intransigent head-on opposition. At present it expresses its reactionary character by its support of Roosevelt and its opportunist support of politician "friends of labor." Its effect as a whole will be to definitely put a stop to the movement toward class consciousness and political independence and prevent it from becoming a step toward socialist consciousness and the growth of the SWP.

The movement toward a labor party is today definitely one which brooks no compromise with capitalist politicians, it strives to resist exclusively on the trade union movement, it tries to develop the class consciousness of the workers. Its end as expressed in a labor party would be undesirable but at the present time it is the movement in which we can win the workers to class consciousness and directly to the SWP, and we must take our stand with it. We must get into this stream and use it to fight against the people's front tendency, but at all times we clearly and categorically point out to the workers in this movement the dangers of a labor party to them.

This means that while our party supports the masses in the labor party tendency it does not and cannot become the advocate of and the spokesman of a national labor party against a national people's front party. Instead we must adopt a flexible strategy based on our support of the labor party tendencies and our opposition to their consummation in a real labor party. Around the slogan for Independent Labor Political Action and our transitional demands we can play a significant role in the present developments.

In the unions all over the country, we advocate our transitional demands and agitate for the entry of the workers into the SWP. In unions where the workers are presented with the alternative of local independent labor party political action as opposed to participation in a movement that will tie them to the liberal wings of the republican and democratic party we should, while pointing out our transitional demands and the inadequacy of a party which does not support them ask them to affiliate with independent labor politics. Once in such a movement we press for greater democracy, for our program of transitional demands, for the SWP and its principles and, as the movement grows, the socialist consciousness of the masses will be expressed in their entry into the SWP -- the revolutionary party. By this policy and this policy alone the SWP will be able to turn the movement from the two capitalist parties into one which will carry the workers to class consciousness, to socialist consciousness, and to workers power in the WORKERS AND FARMERS GOVERNMENT

Dan Leeds -- Chicago, Ill.

AMENDMENT TO PROGRAM OF TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

The Sliding Scale of Wages, as proposed in the Program of Transitional Demands would, if put into effect, be but one more chain binding the workers to the fortunes of capitalism. Who is to determine when and how wages shall be adjusted to meet price changes? The bosses? The government? God forbid. Yet even the most militant shop committees, with their independent audit of books, would be no match for the dishonest statistics of the bosses and the government. Moreover, the inevitable lag between a price change and a wage adjustment would throw the adjustment all out of proportion even before its adoption.

These, however, are but minor arguments against the Sliding Scale of Wages, as compared to the confusion which such a slogan would create. Do we mean that if prices go down workers are to accept a proportionate cut in their already meager wages? This aspect of the question has caused numerous unions, where they are strong enough, to reject a sliding scale of wages, (notably Lewis vs. the steel industry). Or do we mean that wages are to slide in one direction only, and then hold tight when prices begin to slide in the opposite direction? This latter interpretation is a rosy one, but so fantastic as to make us appear ridiculous to the workers as well as to the bosses. It would actually alienate the petty bourgeoisie, who suffer equally from the effects of price changes on their real wages and who are already inclined to blame organized labor for their predicament.

The fallacy of the Sliding Scale of Wages is that it does not go to the root of the problem. In a period of declining capitalism (for that matter, in any period) it is greatly to the workers' advantage to hold fast to their wage scale when prices drop. A rise in prices, during this final period of capitalism, may be due to a temporary boom in business, during which time the strength and militancy of labor will also increase and may be counted on to win some gains for the working class. More often, however, a rise in prices comes about through devaluation of the currency. This was the case in France, where all (and more) of the gains wrung from the capitalists during the great sit down strikes, have been cancelled by debase-ment of the franc. Devaluation is not new. It has occurred in all of the major capitalist countries of the world, and in this last desperate period, is bound to take place again and again at ever more frequent intervals. While devaluation serves in some degree to bolster the capitalist framework, it is the scourge of the proletariat and petty bourgeoisie alike.

Our task is to point out this fact... to explain carefully to the workers and the petty bourgeoisie before the event takes place again here, what devaluation means and what its ruinous effects will be on them; and to unite the two groups on the slogan of "No Devaluation -- Devaluation is a Fraud."

Toward the farmer our approach on this question is slightly more difficult and complicated. He sees greater prosperity for himself in devaluation and the consequent rising prices. Our proposals contained in the section of the Transitional Demands relating to the farm problem will facilitate our approach by offering to him other means of increasing his income. At the same time we must explain to him that his prosperity is closely tied to that of the nation as a whole and that devaluation cannot bring about prosperity.

Coupled with the question of devaluation is that of taxation, which was not gone into by the Resolution on Transitional Demands at all. The bourgeoisie must choose between greater taxation and devaluation. In the coming crisis, as shown by France, it must do both. As yet the full weight of the taxation problem has not been felt in the United States, for in the year 1938 taxpayers are still coasting along on the profits of 1937. 1939 will mark the beginning of really heavy taxation such as has been known abroad, and it goes without saying that every effort will be made to place this burden on the "Little Fellow", the petty bourgeoisie and the workers. The La Follette political organization has already indicated a desire to place new and heavier taxes on the lower income groups, a move which offers us the opportunity to draw the petty bourgeoisie away from that quarter toward the working class.

Our task is twofold. We must make a drive for abolition of taxes on low income groups, i.e., do away with all sales taxes and nuisance taxes on beer, tobacco, cheap amusements etc. and demand that the exemption level of income taxes be raised, not lowered. At the same time we must seek to place the burden of taxation on the rich, where it belongs. We must demand increased income taxes in the higher brackets and abolition of tax exempt securities. Above all we must point to the huge reserves lying idle in the banks and demand a capital tax. This is a slogan which will seem so logical to the masses that the bourgeoisie will be at a loss for arguments with which to counteract it.

Kathleen Burch
Arthur Burch

RESOLUTION on the DRAFT THESIS

"THE DEATH AGONY OF CAPITALISM

and the

TASKS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL"

Submitted by F.X. Perry
and Roger Cross.

After a correct evaluation of the present day political, social and economic conditions of the world presented in the first section of the thesis under the title, "The Objective Prerequisites for a Socialist Revolution," and in "The Proletariat and its Leadership," incorrect conclusions were drawn, making the thesis generally inapplicable and thus unacceptable, for the following reasons:

- 1) Revolutionaries and revolutionary parties have always believed in the necessity of presenting, at all times, demands for and on behalf of the working class, but these demands, whether immediate or transitional, must vary with existing conditions, conditions determined by the objective conditions of society and the political awareness of the working class. Immediate and transitional demands of yesterday become meaningless today, if the conditions for which those demands were created are changed. Immediate, or transitional demands must of necessity be of a tactical nature, and as tactical weapons must be altered, renewed or entirely discarded as conditions change. As the words immediate or transitional themselves imply, such demands are variables. Therefore, under no circumstances have they any place in a programmatic document of a permanent or semi-permanent nature, as the draft thesis now presented by the Fourth International is.
- 2) Any document of a revolutionary party, presented to the working class, be it of a permanent or semi-permanent (transitional) nature, must stress and put in the forefront the revolutionary program of the party. It is incorrect and to be condemned when any such thesis places the revolutionary program of the party in a secondary position, as does the draft thesis where the programmatic declaration was displaced by the transitional demands put forward in a formal and programmatic manner. This formal presentation of the transitional demands misleads the workers and creates the belief that the revolutionary program is abandoned, even if only temporarily, in favor of immediate demands. It puts a disproportionate emphasis on the transitional demands, which are made to assume a position of principled importance, and permits, correctly or incorrectly, the assumption that the Fourth International emphasizes, at the cost of its program, the need for demands to be realized within the framework of capitalism.
- 3) It is not possible, with any hope of success, to criticize the classical social democracy and its attitude towards the minimum and maximum program, and at the same time to embrace certain points of the maximum program of the social democracy, call them transitional demands, and claim for such attitude the justification of those into whose bosom the godly spark was deposited. The transitional demands correctly point out that the realizability or unrealizability of some of the demands "are in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle." If so, then certain of the demands designated as transitional have no place among the transitional demands, since they can be obtained only after or during

the final struggle for power. The thesis presents a picture often not thought through to the end, when it fails to distinguish between demands of a transitional nature, such as workers' defense groups, and the demand for the workers' militia, the latter being a weapon of the proletariat at the time of the final struggle. The same lack of clarity is demonstrated in connection with the demand for workers' control of industry, which at certain times is presented purely and simply in a reformist manner. For example, the demand is presented that "workers no less than capitalists have the right to know the secrets of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry." This demand is dangerous because the working class has no interest whatsoever in the opening of the books and other "participation" in the management, but desires to take over the management as a whole, but this taking over of the management, i.e., workers' control of industry, is not transitional but a demand of the final phase of the revolution.

4) A dangerous lack of clarity, or an outright evasion of presenting the revolutionary position, is expressed in the repeated use of the phrase "critical support," which, according to the thesis, is to be given to certain parties, groups or movements under given conditions. The same lack of clarity is demonstrated in the use of the phrase, "lesser evil," in connection with the changing of the slogan, "the chief enemy is in our own country," to "the defeat of your own government is the lesser evil," and the use of the same phrase in connection with "just and progressive wars."

5) The draft thesis as it is now presented, showing an obvious attempt to displace by it the program of the revolutionary party, will, rightly or wrongly, create in the minds of the workers the impression of a principled departure from the program, tactics and strategy previously recommended by us. In general it is to be assumed that to effectively carry out the work towards realization of the transitional demands, the creation of a new vehicle, that is, a labor party, will become necessary, not only on a national, but on an international scale. The creation of this vehicle by a revolutionary party, or the participation of such a party in the creation of the labor party, represents a principled departure from the program of the Fourth International.

6) The draft thesis, in failing to stress the revolutionary program, and failing to stress the final rather than the immediate or transitional demands, fails to prepare the working class for an understanding of the revolutionary goal. This engenders a definitely reformist tendency in the working class and thus the draft thesis tends to become an obstacle rather than a weapon of the revolution. Such a reformist ideology was implanted in the working class in Germany by the social democracy and the trade unions, which were stressing immediate or transitional demands at the cost of revolutionary program, and thus they failed to prepare the working class for the revolutionary offensive, with the effect that such an offensive could not be reached, even in the face of the fascist danger.

7) The draft thesis, in its more important aspects, contradicts the fundamental position as expressed by the Fourth International in its criticism of the draft thesis of the Comintern and in other programmatic documents.

For these reasons it is resolved that the draft program should be re-edited with the view to eliminate all appearances of a principled turn from the program of the Fourth International and to eliminate any and all appearances of a programmatic displacement of the goal of the Fourth International.

ON THE SLOGAN FOR "A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT"

The thesis on the application of the Transitional Program to the United States proposes the slogan for "A Workers' Government". Comrade Cannon has proposed, as an amendment, the substitution of the slogan for "A Workers' and Farmers' Government". Comrade Cannon has offered no motivation for, nor explanation of, his amendment, though, presumably, the burden of proof of the suitability of his amendment as against the slogan advocated by the National Committee lies on his shoulders. Nevertheless, since the question has been raised, clarification is necessary.

The formal objection which has been raised in discussion to the Cannon amendment is that it commits us to advocacy of a "two class state". This formal objection is not, however, decisive, and indicates a lack of understanding of both slogans. The slogan for "A Workers' Government" is not identical, in all respects, to the demand for "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat"; it is also a transitional slogan, designed like the other transitional slogans to aid in bridging the gap between the maturity of the objective social conditions for the proletarian revolution and the immature political level of the masses.

We would accept the slogan for "A Workers' Government" in order to give it our own content. We understand that the only genuine workers' government can be the dictatorship of the proletariat - the soviet state. We know that the struggle for a genuine "workers' government", however conceived, can, if resolutely pursued to the end, eventuate only in the struggle for the soviet revolution.

Our ideas in this respect are not, however, shared by the masses. In the first stages, what the masses understand by "a workers' government" will not at all coincide with what we understand. They think, and will for some time think, in parliamentary terms. "A workers' government" will mean a "labor government" elected to office in the existing parliamentary setup. Their subjective aim will be the same as ours: a government administered by and in the interests of labor and the masses generally. But they will translate this aim differently into concrete terms. Only in the actual struggle for a labor government, and perhaps through the actual experience of a parliamentary "labor government" in office, will the masses learn that the achievement of a genuine "workers' government" must mean the accomplishment of the soviet revolution.

It is in this way that the slogan for "A Workers' Government" can act as a bridge between parliamentarism and the revolution. Through this slogan the revolutionists can participate in the present struggles, alongside the masses, and can at the same time guide that struggle toward its future required channels.

This, then, is in brief the justification for the National Committee's advocacy of the transitional slogan for "A Workers' Government".

Since the slogan for "A Workers' Government" is itself capable of a reformist interpretation, it is evident that there is no difference in principle between it and the slogan for "A Workers' and Farmers' Government". The same type of analysis can apply to the latter. We can understand the latter slogan, in historical perspective, as actually meaning the dictatorship of the proletariat - i.e., the alliance of proletariat and peasantry with the leadership of the proletariat through the democratic soviets.

Apparently Comrade Cannon prefers the more extended slogan (though here, since he has written nothing on the subject, one must speculate) because it expresses openly the aim of bringing about the alliance between proletariat and peasantry, and because it can serve as an agitational weapon in securing the support of the "peasantry".

No objection in principle can be made to this preference by anyone who accepts the general conception of the transitional program. Indeed, it is or should be clear that the extended slogan is correct for some nations. The error is in believing it to be universally applicable. The specific error now in question is in believing it correct for the United States.

The error results from the attempt to draw too detailed an analogy between Russia, Spain, China and even such nations as France, on the one side, and such a nation as the United States on the other.

The problem of the Russian Revolution was the problem of "the peasantry". The issue depended entirely on whether the mass of the peasantry could be drawn to the side of the workers against both landlords and bourgeoisie.

It is easy to see why this problem was crucial: (1) Agriculture accounted for an overwhelming percentage of the output of the national economy; (2) The overwhelming percentage of the population was in agriculture; (3) Of this agricultural population, a still more overwhelming percentage (all but one or two percent) consisted of small peasants.

Not one of these conditions holds for the United States. The differences are so great as to change the whole character of the central problem of the revolution in this country. (1) Agriculture accounts for only a minor percentage of the output of the national economy; (2) Only a minor percentage (about one-quarter) of the population is in agriculture. (3) The division of the agricultural population is not in the least comparable to that of the agricultural population in Russia, or any similar nation. In the first place, in the United States, a substantial percentage of the agricultural population (around fifteen percent) consists of farm laborers - e.g., agricultural proletarians. Of the farm "operators", around one-quarter are share-croppers, and another quarter are tenants of other varieties: in other words, only about a half of the U.S. farms are owner-operated. But, further, among the owner-operated farms, we do not at all find the average plot of 3, 5 or 10 acres that held for Russia, or for most European nations today. On the contrary, the average farm is of several hundred acres. Moreover, a substantial (not infinitesimal, as in Russia or Spain) percentage of the owner-operators are large-scale agriculturalists, employing labor, renting part of their land to tenants and share-croppers, etc.

Even so ^hsketchy an account should indicate how thin is the analogy between the "peasant problem" in, say, the Russian Revolution with the "farm problem" in the United States.

It is clearly impermissible to employ the word "farmer" in the United States in the same manner that we have employed the word "peasant" in Russia or Spain. "Peasant" in Russia meant more or less everyone in agriculture except the landlords; and this meant more or less everyone on the land, which in turn meant the overwhelming majority in the nation.

Further, the differentiation in status, the class stratifications, among the great mass of the peasantry was on the whole not great. But in the United States the word "farmer" is so loose and vague as to be useless for the purposes of Marxism. Who is meant by it? If it means everyone on the land, then it applies to a vast range of social categories, from agricultural proletariat to farmer-capitalists, and each of the major categories is of considerable size.

But our attitude toward the members of these various categories is and must be entirely different; and their role with reference to the revolution will be sharply different. Agricultural laborers we must approach as proletarians, not at all as "farmers" in any sense. We urge them to organize in unions, and to fight for the same kind of demands as other proletarians.

The tenant-farmers, especially the share-croppers, revert more and more to a semi-proletarian status, not merely in their relations to landlords, but in their work on WPA and other government projects during several months of the year. These, of course, we strive by all means to win to the side of the workers. We must support demands applicable to their conditions: suspension of rent and share payments; suspension of debts; prohibition of evictions; etc.

With reference to the owner-operators, there are also demands that we support, but these demands are formulated exclusively with respect to the lower stratum of the owner-operators, to the poor owner-farmers ridden with mortgages and tax debts and without adequate machinery and fertilizer (conditions applying to about half of the owner-operators). We demand for them a moratorium on mortgage payments and on taxes, free loans or subsidies for machinery and fertilizer, price committees, freight rebates, etc.

But the upper stratum of the owner-operators, comprising perhaps around a quarter of all farm operators, are potentially and actually for the most part enemies and not allies of the workers and their revolution, as well as of the other groups in the farm population. And it is this stratum which is above all meant when people in the United States speak of "farmers". All of the sets of demands which we advocate for the other groups - higher wages for the farm proletariat, suspension of rent payments and debts, even the demands for the lower stratum of owner-operators, are in reality directed against the upper stratum of owner-operators, against the "farmers" in the full American sense of the word.

Our aim in "agricultural policy" must be: first of all to win the agricultural laborers; second, to win the support of share-croppers and tenants; lastly, so far as possible to win alliance from the lower stratum of owner-operators. We can at most expect to neutralize part of the upper stratum of owner-operators; the remainder will be firmly - as experience already clearly shows - on the other side of the barricades.

Along with the sets of demands, some of them transitional demands, which further this complex aim, we accept also the more general demand for a "government" which will advance the interests of agricultural laborers, share-croppers, poor farmers. And this is precisely a "workers' government", not a "workers' and farmers' government". The latter slogan, in the United States, turns the farm problem upside down, and suggests a perspective just the reverse of what our concrete revolutionary perspective must be. It places the emphasis upon the stratum of the agricultural population which

is not merely our enemy and the enemy of the revolution, but the enemy also in the most direct as well as the longer-term sense of those sections of the agricultural population which it must be our aim to win. We must be aware of the automatic transfer of the solution to a problem correct in one nation to another nation where the conditions which made the solution correct are not at all to be found.

To accept the slogan for "A Workers' and Farmers' Government" for the United States would be to introduce a serious tactical disorientation - not indeed into our immediate day-by-day work, where the whole problem is now somewhat abstract - but into our general orientation for the American revolution. That is why we must reject it. The transitional slogan for "A Workers' Government" is necessary, correct and adequate.

James Burnham
August 11, 1938

(STENOGRAPHERS NOTE: The following is a rough draft of a conversation with Crux held July 29, 1938, uncorrected by participants.)

QUESTION: Which is more preferable of the two slogans: "Workers' Government" or "Workers' and Farmers' Government?"

CRUX: I believe it is a very important error to have accepted the formulation, "Workers' Government," instead of "Workers' and Farmers' Government," and I believe the basis of this error is one half-sectarian misunderstanding. One can oppose the slogan of "Workers' Government" with the same arguments used against "Workers' and Farmers' Government," for you can say that Green in conjunction with Lewis-- that is not our government. We can say that Green plus Lewis plus LaFollette, as a representative of the petty bourgeois and peasant -- that is not our government. In that sense we can condemn the slogan of "Workers' Government" as not sufficiently clear. So good, we can condemn it as well as "Workers' and Farmers' Government." If we accept the slogan of "Workers' Government" then all of our other slogans, our whole strategy and tactics, will give a concrete meaning to the slogan. This slogan will become very popular and clear. You workers must take the power. Then we give this program which excluded the power of Green and Lewis, exclude from our point of view as a power which we could accept and support, but then we have deprived ourselves of the possibility of saying to the poor farmers, "It will also be your government." The farmers play a very important role in the United States. In England, this is not a very important question because the workers are the overwhelming majority. In the United States the question of "Workers' and Farmers' Government" is very important. Why deprive ourselves of the possibility in the rural districts to say, "This government would be yours."? That is our drive on the basis of progress, what can you object, farmers? What are your propositions, etc.?

QUESTION: Don't you think the misunderstanding or mistake arises also from a misunderstanding of the transition program itself? The idea back of limiting the slogan is that farmers don't have the same interest as workers, that they will come into conflict.

CRUX: Of course the workers and peasants, the workers in general, the peasants in general, don't have the same interests. The farmers are not a class, but a series of layers, of social strata beginning with semi-proletarian elements and ending with exploiters, big farmers, etc. The slogan "Workers' and Farmers' Government" doesn't include for us the whole peasantry. The content for agitation doesn't include the whole peasantry or farmers. We signify that by our slogan we will introduce a political delimitation in favor of the poor farmers against the rich farmers. The bourgeois democrats as well as the fascists are interested in representing the farmers as a unit and through the higher stratum of the farmers which is totally bourgeois to hold in hand the lower stratum. Contrariwise, we are interested in introducing a wedge, and to omit here the higher stratum and to attract to us the lower. When we say "Workers' and Farmers' Government" in our propoganda, we add every time that we mean the exploited farmers, not exploiters, not the farmers who have agricultural workers -- they are not our allies. In this sense we can say that the more successful we are, the more closely would be the alliance between the workers and the lower strata of the farmers.

It is very possible on some questions, we will have the support even of the middle farmers. We can even say that with some of the higher classes we can have a success, but with the radicalization of our measures, especially during the seizure of power they will be repulsed. But during the radicalization of our activity when we are before the seizure of the power and especially after seizure of the power, the middle elements of farmers can also be rejected for a certain time, because the fluctuation of the farmers is tremendous -- towards the workers, many times against, and only through this fluctuation can we definitely win the exploited majority of the peasants for alliances with them for building up socialist society. In this sense we should understand this slogan in a dynamic perspective and not as an agreement with a definite class for an indefinite time.

The important thing is that we ourselves understand and make the others understand that the farmers, the exploited farmers, cannot be saved from utter ruin, degradation, demoralization, except by a Workers' and Farmers' Government, and that this is nothing but the dictatorship of the proletariat, that this is the only possible form of a Workers' and Farmers' Government. By and by we must give this understanding to the agricultural workers and to the semi-proletarian farmers, that their own government cannot be conducted by La Follette and other bourgeois, only by revolutionary workers.

The farmers themselves are absolutely incapable of creating their own government. This fact is checked by all of history from the middle ages down. Every time they are led by the burghers, the radical burghers. When the peasants began a movement, it was a local movement. Only the burghers gave national character to the Reformation, but all the peasants remained as local sects. The same was true politically of the peasants' government -- the feudal system was vanquished in France only under the guidance of the Jacobins, and the Jacobins were petty bourgeois of urban cities. The same in Russia. Victory was assured only by the workers. The same in Germany. Hitler with petty intellectuals succeeded in winning the support of the peasants. The peasants themselves were ready to follow the guidance of fascists or communists, awaited for salvation, and Hitler was more successful, but Hitler's movement began as a movement of the towns. Naturally it finished under the inspiration of the finance capital.

We must thoroughly understand ourselves that the peasants and farmers who economically represent a survival of the productive system of the middle ages can have no guiding role in politics. They can decide only through the cities; better, they can be guided only by the workers. But it is necessary to pose this slogan before the peasants themselves. We say you must not choose as your alliance the bourgeois, but the workers who are your brothers. And this government would be your government of workers and poor farmers, not of all farmers, but poor farmers.

QUESTION: The question came up of whether it wouldn't be proper under given circumstances in the United States to use the term "nationalization" rather than expropriation, "nationalization coupled on to the idea of being without compensation. The term "nationalization" is a common one and has been exaggerated by workers' movements. For example, the miners put on their program "nationalization of the mines." The railroad workers put on their program "nationalization of the railroads." Would it be better to enlist their support for "Nationalization without Compensation?"

CRUX: The slogan "Expropriation" in the program does not exclude compensation. In this sense, we often oppose expropriation to confiscation. Confiscation excludes compensation, but expropriation can include compensation. How much compensation is another question. For example in the agitation we can be asked, what will you do now, transform the owners and bearers of power into tramps? No, we will give them decent compensation necessary for their life insofar as they are unable to work, that is, the old generation. It is not necessary to imitate the Russians. They suffered intervention from many, many capitalist nations; it deprived them of the possibility of giving compensation. We are a rich people in the United States and when we come into power we will give compensation to the elder generation. In this sense it would not be favorable to proclaim confiscation without any compensation. It is better to use expropriation than confiscation, because expropriation can be equal to confiscation, but can include also some compensation. We should show that we are not a revengeful people. In the United States it is very important to show that it is a question of material possibilities, but we will not personally destroy the capitalist class. Expropriation and nationalization -- I believe we can use both. Expropriation is very important because it signifies an act of revolutionary will. They are the owners of means which should belong to the community. It is necessary to expropriate them. Nationalization can signify as in England, the mines, in France the military industries, a voluntary agreement between the owners and government. The owners became participants in the nationalized property and many of them, in France, for example, became richer than before, for they were saved from bankruptcy. That is why we can use, I believe, the alternatives in our agitation, the words expropriation and nationalization, but underline the word expropriation. We can say to the miner, you wish nationalization. Yes, it is our slogan. It is only the question of conditions. If the national property is too burdened with debts against the former owners, your conditions can become worse than now. To base the whole proceedings upon a free agreement between the owners and the state signifies ruin of the workers. Now you must organize your own government in the state and expropriate them. Good. We will not condemn them to pauperism. We will give them something for life, etc.

FOR THE "WORKERS AND FARMERS GOVERNMENT".

It is difficult to grasp the point of view of those who consider the issue a "principled" one. Quite correctly Comrade Burnham points out that the slogan for a "Workers Government" is a transitional slogan not at all identical with the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat". The slogan for the "Workers Government" certainly lends itself to reformist interpretation, but because it can be made to appeal to workers in the process of becoming class conscious and because we can fill it with our content (not necessarily all at once) we would adopt some such slogan as an educational bridge across which the leftward moving masses can be led towards the ultimate goal of soviet power and proletarian dictatorship. No objection that is raised against the slogan "Workers and Farmers Government" cannot similarly be raised against the idea of a "Workers Government". Is the objection that we are calling for a two class government? But in actual practice the "Workers Government" can be quite similarly interpreted. What Workers Government is it to be? The government of the trade union bureaucrats, of the Greens, Wolls, Lewisses, Dubinskys? That would surely be a Workers Government---and a two class government. For all those figures are the agents of the capitalists in the ranks of the workers and it is our task to make this clear to the working class. It is strange that some comrades now find a principled difference involved in the choice between these slogans, particularly since the slogan has been used for a number of years by our French section without any of these comrades raising the slightest objection. Or is the issue principled only for the United States?

Comrade Burnham raises the issue as to the correctness of the slogan not elsewhere, but only in the United States. He objects to any attempt to apply the slogan "Workers and Farmers Government" universally. But nobody, so far as I am aware, has attempted to apply it universally. It would not at all apply, for example, in England. But it does apply in the United States.

The capitalist class everywhere today looks upon the farmers as an anchor of safety which helps to stabilize capitalist society. Without this buffer group (as an important part of the middle class, although as will be pointed out, the farmers do not form a single class) the small minority of capitalists would be face to face with the proletariat in all its mighty strength. The New Deal has had as one of its major aims the economic preservation of the farmers precisely for this reason. Had economic laws in their "purity" been permitted to govern, without government intervention through subsidies the same process of disintegration of agricultural economy would have proceeded in the United States as in England, to the point where the farmers would have become a negligible factor, numerically and economically. In England capitalism not only robbed agriculture of all its wealth, but carried the process of ruin to such completion that today the farmers form, families and all, only some seven percent of the population. Thus in England it would be quite unnecessary to argue the point, in a transition program, of whether to call for a workers government or a workers and farmers government. But in the United States, as earlier in France, the capitalists have learned from history, and, while continuing their exploitation of the farmers as intensively as ever, they utilize their government to maintain

the farmers as farmers, even if at a low economic status.

The capitalist government pretends at all times to speak for the "farmers". Roosevelt registers as a farmer to give added point to this pretense. And indeed the bourgeois government does speak for the exploiting group among the farmers, that group which "farms the farmers." The ruling class does everything in its power to maintain allegiance among the farmers to the present system. A systematic propaganda, well subsidized, is constantly poured out to drive a wedge between the farmers and the workers. In particular, the hatred of the farmers is directed against the organized workers in the trade unions. This is accomplished by making it appear that these unions are selfish instruments which force so much out of the bosses that these same bosses, now as purchasers of agricultural products, cannot afford to pay the farmers better prices. Thus the bosses constantly dangle an alliance before the farmers against the working class with the illusion that the farmers will get more of the national income if they help the monopolists to beat down wages.

But the farmers are not a single class. They form a collection of all the classes. In his analysis at this point Comrade Burnham bolsters up his reasoning in an amazing manner, apparently reducing a real issue to one of terminology only. For he tells us that the term "farmers" applies here in America to "owner-operators", nay to "the upper stratum of the owner-operators" above all. Thus it would appear that when we advocate the "Workers and Farmers Government" we are advocating a joint government of the proletariat and the upper stratum of the owner-operators on the farms. We are told that the word "farmer" is so loose and vague as to be useless for the purposes of Marxism. It is perfectly true that the term farmers includes owner-operators, tenants, share-croppers, farm workers, and various combinations of these elements. It is the function of Marxism to enter such a complex social realm so as to drive a wedge between the exploiters and the exploited. This is done by means of a program for the exploited layers, a program (does Burnham teach us anything here?) which sets the exploited against the exploiters. Our program and our propaganda are an attempt to focus the light on the realities that exist, not an acceptance of bourgeois looseness and vagueness. The capitalists would like nothing better than to have the term "farmers" apply only to the upper stratum of exploiting owner-operators. But even they cannot do this. In their census they always divide the farmers among owners, renters or tenants, sharecroppers, farm laborers. True those who work on the farm for wages are included with the wage earners, but they are also workers of the land or farmers. The most cursory examination of the literature will show the use of the word "farmers" to include the large exploited majority of those who work in the fields. Thus Lenin in his work on American agriculture that is by no means outdated except in its statistics, says: "Even on this basis we find that more than one third of all farmers are directly exploited by the great landowners and capitalists---". Comrade Burnham is willing to fill the term "Workers Government" with our content; that is, he is willing to interpret what he means by laying down meanings and a program. Will he not allow us to do likewise with the "farmers"? Must we add in front of this term the word "exploited", or will he allow us to show this in the actions we propose and the directives we give to the farmers. And surely we cede to the bourgeoisie that half million

of exploiting capitalist farmers, to whom we offer no program but rather against whom we direct part of the activities of the real farmers from our point of view.

But make no mistake, the question is by no means terminological alone. For what is involved is the weight of influence of the "farmers" in the fight against capitalism. One of the points made by Comrade Burnham is that "Only a minor percentage (about one-quarter) of the population is in agriculture." One-quarter of the population a minor percentage? As Burnham uses the word here, I get the impression that he means more than the numerical connotation alone, he means to minimize the importance of the farmers and their contribution to the proletarian revolution. But in this minor percentage are included both white and negro sharecroppers who live as nearly like European peasants as any section in America. Also a large section of poor farmers hopelessly in debt to the bankers. Even bourgeois writers refer to the mortgage as the bridge to tenancy, and this in turn as the bridge to wage-earning on the farm. Burnham does not deny the need for winning over these forces to the side of the workers. The program he offers for this purpose is part of the transition program adapted to this purpose. But he does not wish to sum this program up in political terms.

To weigh the importance of the exploited farmers (including the "independent farmers" exploited in the capitalist market by monopoly capitalism) the question should be posed in this form: Can the working class win the victory in the United States without the support of the farmers? We know that the farmers cannot unite and form a strong political party of their own. They can follow only, follow one or the other of the two major contenders for power. If the farmers side with the capitalists--they can then starve the city proletariat--the working class would be doomed to defeat. On the other hand, in a revolutionary situation, the farmers could deliver a mortal blow to the capitalist financial structure and to capitalist economy. (Throwing off of debts, food agreements directly with the working class, participation in the soviets). Comrade Burnham is willing to strive to prove to the workers the need for our leadership. How shall we prove to the farmers that the Workers Government is in reality their government, the government of all the exploited as well? Shall we not sum up our program for the farmers politically by calling, in the transition program for the Workers and Farmers Government? Comrade Burnham is, I am sure, heartily in favor of soviets of exploited farmers in the country. How shall such soviets arise and how shall they be linked with the workers soviets? Is not this linkage to be actively attempted and striven for? And how can this be done except by pointing out the road for the farmers to follow to the working class? The call for a Workers and Farmers Government is more than symbolic of the fact that we would adopt the entire program of the exploited farmers and that we would carry this program out in life. It is the slogan around which we carry on all our propaganda to achieve the alliance between workers and farmers, it is part of the transition program to involve the farmers in struggle against capitalism, to teach them through experience in this struggle who is friend and who foe, to counteract the propaganda of the capitalist class among the farmers, to reduce to a minimum the oscillations back and forth of these necessary but uncertain allies. In our opinion the motivation given for the use of

"Workers Government" is actually one which aids the bourgeoisie to maintain their grip on the ideology of the farmers, to win the farmers away from the workers. The value of any slogan lies in its correct summing up of a program or a necessary trend of action. The term "Workers Government" alone does not sum up our program of cementing the alliance between the ^{exploited} workers in town and country, it ignores the need for this alliance. In that sense it can actually be harmful, and objectively of aid to the capitalists. It is necessary to encourage actively the building of soviets at the proper time and to create a link between the soviets of city and farm. This is accomplished by calling for a Workers and Farmers Government. To say that this is not Marxism is to ignore the whole nature of slogans and the method of applying them in complex ("vague") socially contradictory situations.

Jack Weber
August 19, 1938

SUPPLEMENTARY LABOR PARTY STATEMENT

by
Glen Trimble

Some confusion has arisen in the minds of some comrades due to the fact that my "Statement on the Labor Party" included in Internal Bulletin No. 2 carried no date line or explanatory note. That statement was written before the plenum of the National Committee and submitted to it. Writing in late March or early April it was of course impossible to deal with the material issuing from the Plenum or written subsequently. The only material I had was Comrade Burnham's article in the New International and it was only to it that I could directly reply.

However it does not seem necessary to change my statement or my position in the light of subsequent documents. The tendencies which I saw as implicit in Comrade Burnham's article are explicit in the later PC majority resolution on the Labor Party. In the latter the earlier attempts at reconciliation with our traditional position are abandoned. We are told that "the problem of CREATING a labor party is placed upon the order of the day"; that the "SWP gives positive and unambiguous support to the labor party movement in general and TO ALL ITS LOCAL MANIFESTATIONS" (a position, in its all inclusiveness and rigidity never before, to my knowledge, held by ANY working class party, reformist or revolutionary); that we are to share "creation" without sharing "ANY responsibility"; the majority, finally, has "sufficient (though unexplained) assurance" to "predict that the resistance of the bureaucracy" to independent labor politics "will be broken." These amazing statements mark the high tide of proponent optimism.

The August Burnham-Shachtman article indicates a certain ebb. Confident prediction is replaced with an estimate of the labor party as "less likely" than other variants. The break with past position is VERBALLY softened by skirting the question of creation and omitting the commitment to All local manifestations, yet the essential question, and division, remains the same as it was in 1936. No one proposed then or proposes now a difference on the question of recognizing and working with an existing labor party with substantial mass base. The tactics of these relations have always included and still include entry under certain circumstances. The attempt to pose the question as one for or against entry is absurd. The dividing line and the central issue is the question of ADVOCACY, PARTICIPATION IN CREATION AND BUILDING. It is these things that impel responsibility, regardless of verbal denial, and that pose the questions of mixing the banners and of joining the toboggan slide consequent on diminishing choices between progress and reaction. To divert the issue into a sham battle over entry, as does Comrade Kogan, is to fail to begin to understand the problem before us.

I do not now want to take further space. The arguments of the supporters of the present party position have been presented very ably by Comrade Draper and will be supplemented by other comrades. It is the proponents of the change who suffer from lack of effective and serious argument. I hope that the leading

comrades who hold that position will avail themselves of their opportunity and responsibility to the membership.

I, of course, support completely the substitute proposed by Comrade Draper and propose to vote and work for its acceptance by the party membership.

ARTICLE

Submitted by

L. Kogan

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The main distinguishing feature in those developments within the American working class during the last few years which first led to the formation of the CIO, and then to the organization of the LNPL - is the fact that these developments took place without the active intervention of a revolutionary Marxist party. On the contrary, these developments took place despite the Stalinist party, and now they are occurring in the background of the first rumblings of the revolt of the CIO unions against the Stalinist policy of rule or ruin. To this must be added the whole policy of the Foster-Browder party during the period of the great crisis of 1929-1934: the smashing of the movement of the unemployed, the "third period" policy in the trade unions which resulted in the smashing of the progressive movement in them, then the about face turn and the crawling before the "social-fascists" of yesterday. To the historically determined political backwardness of the American working class was added the havoc-wreaking disorientation of the Stalinist party and the retarding influence of the defeats of the world proletariat. It is evident that under these circumstances the grip of the labor bureaucrats on the political development of the American workers could only be strengthened.

Thus any evaluation of the movement for the formation of an independent political party of the American workers and of the role which the SWP should play in this movement must issue not only from principles upon which a revolutionary Marxist organization operates in general, but also such an evaluation must be based on an understanding of the specific features, political and social, under which the American workers are beginning to counterpose themselves to the rest of the capitalist society, i.e. are becoming class conscious. And here it is necessary to repeat again that these first steps are being made without a party of revolutionary Marxism which could effectively intervene into these processes from outside in order to give it the revolutionary expression of a revolt against the capitalist state. Such an outside interference would have to be based first of all on at least a relative mass influence in the trade unions. This is not the case with us. Yet our Marxian analysis of the social crisis under which such a reformist party develops permit us 1) to recognize the progressive character of the desire of the American workers to have their own independent party, 2) to advocate the formation of such a party, 3) gives us a reasonable

degree of assurance that our intervention from within will have a strong crystallizing influence.

The difference between the majority of the P.C. and Com. Draper's minority resolution is that the latter relates itself to the Labor Party as a development along straight lines, whereas the first recognizes it as a process which will undergo changes that will more or less deeply reflect the social crisis which itself predicated the movement for the formation of the labor party. The minority resolution asks: "Where will this movement lead to?" And it answers: "Ahead of it lies either labor party action, or revolutionary political action." This narrowly and at the same time abstractly posed dilemma leads the minority resolution to the conclusion that "our basic approach demands that we seek to block the road toward the crystallization of this sentiment in the form of a labor party." The question is only how could we block this sentiment? The minority resolution recognizes and hails the "progressive subjective development" embodied in a break from the old capitalist parties. By that it recognizes the historically determined, though also unhappily delayed formation of the political class consciousness of the American working class. Being a revolutionary Marxist Com. Hal Draper should understand that a political sentiment emanating from political backwardness cannot be blocked by anything, especially if this sentiment has a progressive character. A party of revolutionary Marxism is not acting according to its own free will, however revolutionary this will may be. On the other hand a correctly understood necessity to act in such a manner as to be able to intervene in a process actively in order to crystallize a revolutionary sentiment in it, gives a party of revolutionary Marxism the necessary assurance and the unity of its will to act.

The minority resolution states that the disparity between the objective situation and the backwardness of the American working class "requires that we take the path of the transitional program in an effort to hurdle the course of the reformist political development which the American workers had to go through." (underlined in the original. L.K.) Yet in the Discussion Bulletin No. 2 the minority statement asserts that the minority regrets that it "can give no magic formulas to ... seekers of the philosopher's stone." The P.C. majority position assigns to the transitional demands a much more modest role so far as the work within the movement for the labor party is concerned. The transitional demands make it possible for us not to take any responsibility for the Labor party because "the labor party can preserve progressive significance only during a comparatively short transitional period", and thus the transitional demands serve as a test as to the character of the movement for the creation of the labor party and as to the effectiveness of our work within it.

This different approach to the question how to apply the transitional demands, from within or from without, also flows from the different approach to the problem of the labor party. The minority resolution states that: "The vacuum from which the progressive significance of a labor party has fled is filled with a reactionary content. The establishment of such a political machine means a positive obstacle on the road of the development of the workers, a positive enemy of the revolutionary movement." In other words the labor party is taken as an entity which will

arrive on schedule according to the time table of history. In contradistinction to this the majority resolution refuses to consider the labor party as an established political machine before such a machine has been built. It takes the movement for the labor party as a lever in order to intervene in that process where the backward subjective forces of the American revolution are confronted both with the capitalist state and with the agents of that state in the form of the labor bureaucracy and the Stalinist disruptors and war mongers. The majority resolution states: "When and how the labor party will be formed, what scope and mass base it will acquire in the period ahead, and through what stages and splits it will pass, the future will disclose."

The minority resolution makes an effort to escape a sectarian approach to the problem of the labor party. First it separates itself from the sectarians who express "the view that we should have nothing to do with this morass of reformism." This is entirely correct. I personally witnessed how such sectarians became so panicky at the prospect of working from within in the labor party that they lost their ability to understand certain common features in the tactics of boring from within and of the tactics of the united front. Yet in the USA because of the backwardness of the American workers the supplementary features of these two tactics acquire a special importance. Second, the minority resolution states that in instances where it would be hard to avoid a head-on collision with the labor party sentiment, a critical support may be given to an independent labor party candidate. However, the sectarian attitude is unmistakably present here because it is based among other things on an attempt to localize, classify and dissect a movement which can be understood only on a national scale.

The concluding proposals contained in the minority resolution are splendid so far as the SWP is concerned. No one can oppose them as such. Yet we are confronted not only with the tying up of the SWP organizationally in order better to confront the new situation as it develops before our eyes, but we also are confronted with a problem of how to make it a mass party of the American working class at the time of the social crisis of the American capitalism.
