

Resolution on the U. S.

1946?

TO N. C. MEMBERS:

The attached is the edited version of the Resolution on the American question adopted by the convention. In accordance with the plenum decision it is submitted to you for your vote, comments and criticisms. *Please reply by November 7.*

Ernest R. McKinney  
National Secretary

## RESOLUTION ON THE UNITED STATES

### I. Introduction.

The period ahead in the United States will be characterized by sharpening class struggles. The issues around which they will be fought will transcend the traditional trade union level and increasingly force the labor movement to concentrate on the broad social and economic questions that constitute the fundamental problems of our time. This development will continue to heighten the political consciousness of the working class and, in turn, will be spurred on by the latter. The sharpening struggles, the nature of the issues involved and the heightened political consciousness of the working class will lead to a political re-alignment on the American scene with the working class undergoing a rapid growth of class consciousness resulting in the establishment of labor as an independent class political force.

The objective basis for this political development will be the limited economic boom that will characterize American economy for the coming period. Though the emergence of a boom in American economy in this stage of world capitalism temporarily "reverses" the historic trend, it does not eliminate it. Born of the special position of American capitalism in the post-war world, of America's traditional resources in industry, agriculture and manpower and of the unique internal economic situation (accumulated individual savings mostly in the hands of the middle class, and tremendous consumer demands assuring a ready market) which resulted from the war economy, the economic boom will exhaust itself as a short cycle within the historic tendency of capitalist decline and will be absorbed by the latter.

However, the political line of our party, unlike its programmatic principles, must be based directly upon the immediate cycle, rather than upon the historic curve. Our party, therefore, bases itself upon the prospect of working class struggles that develop in accordance with the forms of struggle produced by a period of relatively high employment and economic instability characteristic of an inflationary period with constantly changing wage-price relationships. The forms of working class struggle under these conditions are primarily strike struggles that are born of the self-confidence of the workers in a period of high employment and the pressure of rising prices upon their living standards. However, the nature of the historic epoch of capitalism as well as the immediate problems confronting the workers does not permit these mass struggles to remain at the simple wage level.

The relationship of wages, prices and profits forces labor to face the problems of the economy as a whole and, thereby, challenges capital's unlimited control over production. Strikes that have as their objective labor's intervention in controlling prices and profits challenge the fundamental social relations of capitalist production. Such objectives cannot be realized purely through strikes nor within a single industry. The struggle for these objectives forces labor to forge political weapons and develop a program for the class as a whole. Given the nature of the period and the objectives of labor, the politicalization of its struggle will not substitute purely parliamentary actions for mass struggles, but will, rather, fuse economic and political struggles in a manner

fraught with revolutionary potentialities. The Workers Party, therefore, looks ahead with confidence and anticipation to the coming period as the one which will mark the beginning of the American labor movement's liberation from its bourgeois chains and its long-awaited entry upon the stage of history as an independent class force. With this development the role of the Marxists in the United States will undergo a decisive change. For the first time in its history American Marxism will be functioning in the midst of a politically organized working class. The indispensable arena for the building of the mass revolutionary party will have been erected. The Workers Party considers the coming period as decisive in determining the extent to which it can gear itself to play a vanguard role in the building of such a mass revolutionary party. Determined to concentrate its maximum forces in industry and the trade unions, armed with its program of transitional demands, the party enters this period with an understanding of its tasks based on the following analysis of the American scene.

## II. World Position of American Imperialism at War's End.

The United States emerged from World War II as the dominant world power. Already the world's most powerful industrial nation at the beginning of the war, the United States, far from suffering war-time devastation as affected every other major power, emerged from the war with a vastly expanded means of production. Manufacturing facilities, skilled labor force, land under cultivation, mines in operation, scientifically increased productivity of labor and available investment capital all increased in the United States, whereas the world trend in these basic economic categories has been a sharp and catastrophic decline during the course of the war. In shipping alone, the United States constructed a merchant marine equal to the combined merchant fleets of the world before the war. Basing itself upon its overwhelming economic superiority, the United States constructed a military machine that stands second to none. Its air force, backed by a tremendous aircraft industry, is in a class by itself. Its naval power outweighs that of Great Britain, the only remaining important naval power, by a wide margin.

The only serious rival to American world domination is Russia, with whom American imperialism must share domination of Europe and Asia. In fact, Russia remains the only nation not subject to direct pressure of American imperialism. However, despite many advantages which the Russian ruling class enjoys over the American in the form of its nationalized economy, its totalitarian regimentation, its greater manpower and land mass and the peculiar influence it wields in key countries (France) through the Stalinist parties, it remains incomparably weaker in the decisive sphere of industrial productivity.

However, the United States has achieved this unique and unprecedented world position in a period of historic decay of international capitalism and under conditions of general ruin and chaos in the most important centers of civilization (Europe, Asia). The very process of eliminating its rivals, destroying its enemies and bankrupting its allies, by which American imperialism emerged on top, has also created a world situation that renders the full exploitation of its dominant position all but impossible. The im-

perialist war, through which the leading imperialist nations sought to resolve their internal economic problems, has brought in its wake an intensification of all the contradictions of world capitalism and, therefore, a worsening of the internal problems, either immediately or within a short period, of each of the capitalist nations. The United States, regarded as the one "lucky" power, the "real victor," etc. is not immune to this basic development. The vitality shown by American economy in its war production, which surpassed the most optimistic estimates, cannot obscure the fact that for ten years preceding the war (1929-39) American economy was in the grip of a paralyzing depression. Unless American imperialism can set world economy on its feet and stabilize it, as a pre-condition to exploiting it, world economic chaos will plunge American economy back to its pre-war levels and beyond.

American policy is, therefore, directed toward the achievement of world stability, peace and equilibrium as the indispensable prerequisite to the achievement of its world aims. As part of this policy is its support of the United Nations, the World Bank, the UNRRA, the International Labor Organization, and other measures of international control in which the United States is assured the final, decisive voice. Also as part of this policy of stabilization is its building up of counter-weights to the Stalinist parties where they achieve mass influence (primarily Western Europe) in the form of the Social Democracy and "liberal" Catholic parties. Of the same pattern is its intervention in the colonial struggles on behalf of negotiated solutions which avoid wholesale violence against the oppressed nation but divert the latter from a revolutionary struggle for genuine independence through compromise arrangements which benefit primarily the colonial bourgeoisie.

However, the advanced stage of disintegration of world capitalism will not permit American imperialism to achieve any serious measure of international stability and peace, even for a short time. Economic stabilization is only possible on the basis of an acceptance of a standard of living drastically below their pre-war levels on the part of the majority of the nations of the world. The voluntary acceptance of such a status under conditions of American exploitation of world resources and market is completely excluded. The prospect is for quite the opposite - sharpening class conflict and continued political instability within the impoverished nations and a rising tide of national resentment and resistance to American domination. Despite all its "liberal" and "pacifistic" policies, American imperialism is rapidly earning the well-deserved hatred of the oppressed and exploited peoples everywhere, as has been the case with every oppressor nation throughout history. For behind these policies directed toward world stabilization is the driving will of the American ruling class for an "American solution" to world affairs, i.e. one that will leave American imperialism in complete and exclusive control of the world market and in control of the political destinies of the world necessary to assure uninterrupted exploitation of its favorable economic position.

America's will to dominate cannot be asserted by diplomatic method alone. The very success of the latter is dependent upon the implied threat represented by American economic and military power. American economic policy dictates which nations shall be reconstructed, at what tempo and to what extent. For many nations

American policy dictates whether they shall survive or not in the most literal sense since they are dependent upon the United States for the very bread they eat. And behind American economic power stands American military power, which, in the course of the war, revealed the crushing might of armies that are based upon an endless flow of materials provided by the world's biggest industrial machine. This military power stands poised over the world with accentuated terror because of its stockpiles of atomic bombs and the world's biggest air force with which to deliver them.

Even if the United States was able to force its policies upon a resisting world, and the case of Argentina's successful defiance indicates the difficulties involved, there is no prospect that American imperialism could construct a workable system of world economy, even upon lowered living standards for its victims. All the contradictions inherent in capitalism and at work with such devastating results since 1929 not only remain unsolved but have been further complicated by the effects of the war. The dilemma of American imperialism is illustrated by the problems posed by the future of England, Germany and Japan, its foremost industrial rivals before the war. American imperialism dare not permit British capitalism to decline any further without inviting revolutionary consequences in England and on the Continent. It is therefore forced to aid British industry get back on its feet through a three billion dollar loan. England, however, though no longer the "workshop of the world," is still primarily a workshop. Its rebuilt and modernized industry has meaning only to the extent it increases British exports and improves England's position in the world market. But this takes place primarily at the expense of the United States. American imperialism cannot, therefore, avoid sharing the world market with Great Britain, even though the latter will not recover its pre-war position. Likewise with Japanese and the Allied-sphere of German industry, which American imperialism will re-establish as its advance bases against Russia in Asia and Europe. A going economy in these two highly industrial nations requires access to the world market. Both nations must import raw materials and foodstuffs which they can only pay for with industrial products. Here, too, the role of Germany and Japan in the world market will be kept considerably below its pre-war level, but American world policy will require that it make concessions in the world market to its defeated ex-enemies and present satellites in the anti-Russian front.

All of these complications, both the political and economic, would have some chance of solution by the United States were it not for the fact that the indispensable cornerstone for such world stabilization is economic stability within the United States. It is precisely the latter, however, that the American ruling class cannot assure to itself. American economy has become the foundation for capitalist stability everywhere but, precisely because it is such an integral part of world economy, it cannot escape the effects of world instability nor, because of its own inherent instability, can it invest world economy with any durable equilibrium.

Contributing to all the disrupting factors within the world of capitalism is the prospect of continued strained relations between this American dominated world and Russia's world of bureau-

cratic collectivism, strained relations which will cause the nations of the world to live in the shadow of World War III even if the necessary prerequisites for the latter do not materialize for the next two decades. The maintenance of the two world spheres as uneasy armed camps with large standing armies, feverish research in weapons of war, stockpiling of strategic materials, dispersal of strategic industries, the operation of the economy in a state of semi-preparation for war production will all act as a deterrent to the "normalization" of economic life and stability in political and diplomatic relations.

It is to be concluded, therefore, that the aim of American imperialism to resolve its own internal contradictions through domination of world economy is destined to failure. The new world position of American capitalism cannot reverse the historic tendencies of decline which operated with such devastating results from 1929 to 1939. The American bourgeoisie has reached the zenith of its power in an era when any measure of durable stability, peace and equilibrium are impossible to maintain. The American bourgeoisie has begun its empire building in a period when all empires are doomed to the disintegrating tendencies of economic catastrophes and violent political upheavals, all beneath the ever-present threat of a new and more devastating world war. World domination cannot, therefore, save American capitalism. The historic tendency of capitalist decline and death agony remains an integral part of its destiny.

### III. The Immediate Prospect Is for an Economic Boom

While the historic prospect of American capitalism is that of declining production and mass unemployment as part of the social crisis of capitalism on a world scale, the immediate prospect is for an economic boom with a high level of production and a relatively small amount of unemployment. The boom is based upon a conjunction of the following factors: (a) the ready market provided by five years of accumulated demand for consumer goods as a result of curtailed production during the war, (b) the potential purchasing power represented by cash reserves accumulated during the war-time period of full employment and overtime pay (over \$150 billion in bank deposits and war bonds of individuals), (c) the relatively high incomes of five million farm families whose prospects for continued prosperity are good as a result of the vast agricultural areas devastated by the war, (d) the large orders for heavy equipment placed by foreign countries through credits made available by United States government loans (Great Britain, France, Belgium, The Netherlands), (e) the continued government expenditures for military purposes (though reduced, still higher than any previous peace-time budget), for various subsidies, GI loans and other allowances, and for necessary public works, including those of local governments, (f) the huge cash reserves of corporations piled up out of war-time profits and available for extensive modernization of plants and equipment, (g) the swollen cash reserves of banks available on easy terms for industrial expansion and the financing of consumer credit accounts, (h) the prospect for continued employment and rising prices, both of which induce workers to invest their earnings in durable goods like houses, automobiles, refrigerators, radios, etc. rather than bank them.

The exact length of this boom is, of course, unpredictable due to the many and varied factors of which it is compounded and of the very real possibility that the inflationary trend will get out of control and quickly drive the economy to a breaking point in the form of a rapid downward spiral of deflation. All indications are that for the period with which this resolution must deal, the boom trend will remain operative.

The danger of a run-away inflation ending in a rapid deflation cannot be discounted. The lessening of price controls with resulting spiraling of prices in a wage-price chase and a tremendous speculative profit-taking can create such a fast movement of prices upward that credits would be frozen, much construction stopped, huge inventories accumulated through withholding goods in anticipation of higher prices and bigger profits, continuing shortages, depreciation of savings, disruption of steady production, mounting strike waves, declining purchasing power of workers and rising unemployment. If such an inflationary spiral develops and results in deflationary collapse before any degree of stabilization has been achieved in world economy, the United States could be plunged into an economic paralysis of greater extent than that of 1929-1934 when the number of unemployed reached sixteen million. The probability of such a deflationary collapse within two years is not very high.

#### IV. The Boom Will Stimulate Class Struggles

While establishing the unsoundness of this boom and, above all, the fact that it is the forerunner of another, and inevitable, economic crisis, it is necessary to make the existence of the boom the point of departure for the political perspectives of the party in this period. These perspectives are for a period of bold and aggressive struggles by the American working class, the first storm waves having already broken. It is in the period of boom that there is no place in the working class for moods of depression and passivity. It is in such a period that the workingclass, massed once more by production, feels its economic indispensability and therefore its economic power. It is in such a period that the proletariat is prepared not only to make bold and comprehensive economic and political demands but to enforce them by means of its organized social power.

It would be a fatal error to see the tempo of class struggle in the coming period in terms of the last post-war boom of 1921-1929. There are a whole series of factors that are fundamentally different between the two periods. The most important ones are: (a) the organized labor movement today represents five times the strength it had in the immediate period following World War I, (b) the struggles following World War I resulted in defeats for labor in which it not only failed to organize the crucial steel industry but was routed from the advanced positions it took during the war, while the struggles following World War II resulted in the strengthening and consolidation of labor's position, (c) the American Dollar was able to bring about a relative stabilization of the international scene following the first war while we have seen that this is not likely in the present period, (d) the experience of mass unemployment, the organization of the mass production industries by the CIO, and the experience with the war economy have all contributed to raising

the social consciousness of the American working class to a decisively higher level than prevailed at the end of the first World War and (e) the intervention of government in economy is quantitatively and qualitatively so far beyond that of the first World War that its effect upon the politicalization of the working class will not permit the political passivity of labor that developed after 1924.

The whole international situation, plus all the recent experiences of the present generation, plus a vague but growing understanding of the contradictions of American capitalism itself, combine to deprive all classes of real confidence in the durability of the boom. The determination of the working class to reach the maximum security possible during the temporary prosperity will conflict increasingly and more violently with the anarchy of capitalist production and the determination of the ruling class to achieve the highest rate and the greatest mass of profit and a stronger grip upon the political machinery during the next period. Hence the boom opens up the perspective of sharp and widespread class struggles, which, in turn, will contribute to the intensification of the social crisis in this country.

#### V. The Growing Social Consciousness of American Workers

The period ahead will be one of crystallizing social consciousness in the proletariat accompanied and based upon a growing loss of confidence in capitalist stability and in capitalism's ability to provide security. Although still heavily laden with the blinding ideology of the bourgeoisie and of trade union reformism, the advanced sections of the American working class, now that the restrictions and shackles of the war period are largely removed, have already stepped beyond the traditional confinements of the pure-and-simple wages struggle and put forward demands, revolutionary in their implications, for partial control of society. The mine workers have responded solidly to the demand that their own class organization shall have exclusive control of a health and security fund. The General Motors workers have responded solidly to the demand that their own class organization shall have at least partial control not only of wages but also of prices and profits -- and this response was unshaken by the most tremendous single campaign in defense of capitalist property and capitalist control ever organized by the ruling class of this country. The insurmountable disorganization of capitalism is assurance that these and similar and even bolder demands will be made in the coming period by wider sections of the American working class. They express the determination of the masses to intervene as a class to obtain that social security which capitalism is unable to guarantee. They underline the highly favorable perspective of class struggle and advancing class consciousness in the United States.

It would be most shortsighted to regard the program of the General Motors strikers as "accidental", due to the socialist background of Walter Reuther. Even John L. Lewis would have been regarded as a madman had he sought to present such a program to the CIO ten years ago. It is not the origin of the ideas but their ready and widespread acceptance which indicates the rising social consciousness of American workers. No working class could remain immune to such repeated shocks to its social outlook



as were provided the American working class by the depression, the organization of the CIO based on the mass industries and the experience with the "miracle of production" during the war on the basis of Government financing and control of production. These experiences have etched deep impressions upon the minds of the workers and are a guarantee against a return to the complacency and passivity of the 1920's.

The fact that the GM program is rooted in the objective situation confronting the workers is also seen from the fact that all other unions operating in the basic industries show tendencies toward the same approach in their various demands, regardless of how their programs suffer from greater unclarity and formlessness than that of the GM strikers. The single fact that the CIO as a whole stands committed to fight for a guaranteed annual wage is sufficient indication of this trend.

The very nature of the boom period economy speeds this process of growing social consciousness. In deflationary periods the unions tend to confine their economic struggles to resisting wage cuts and their more radical social demands to the parliamentary arena. In an inflationary period, the workers economic power is not only vastly greater but the changing price and wage relations force the workers to approach the problem of maintaining their living standard from the point of view of the economy as a whole, which means in this situation linking wages with prices and profits. A struggle of the workers that has as its aim to raise wages while controlling prices, thereby curtailing profits, immediately transcends the traditional trade union level and forces the workers to struggle on a broad social front which challenges the existing relationships of capitalist production. Such a struggle must set its aim, not merely to regulate wages, but to regulate the economy. It becomes the first step in workers control of production, with the demand to "Open the books" as the necessary pre-condition to such control. It gives labor the leadership of the lower middle class, the farmer, the white collar worker and all other "little people," in short, the leadership of the nation in the struggle against monopoly capitalism. "Wage Increases without Price Rises," "Open the Books," the guaranteed annual wages and union health funds financed by levies upon the employers are all products of the objective economic situation which spur on the social consciousness of the workers and, in themselves, give an indication of its growth.

#### VI. Main Strategic Aim: Class Independence

Never, in any country, have the trade unions been such a powerful force as they are today in the United States. The social weight and political significance of 15 million organized trade unionists is only beginning to be comprehended, even by the Marxists. Its effect upon class relations in this country is profound. The labor movement represents a five-fold increase over that of the period immediately following World War I. The weight of such a movement thrown into the scales of the economic struggle in a period of high employment is overwhelming. The fact that the largest mass strikes were conducted without more than token picket lines in industries notorious for their bloody resistance, speaks for itself. The powerful bourgeois propaganda campaigns about the "unfairness" of the Wagner Labor Act and the

tremendous drive being developed for legislation that will cripple the effectiveness of the unions indicates the inability of the capitalists to deal effectively with the labor movement in economic struggle at this stage. Nor has the expansion of the trade union movement run its course. On the contrary, all indications point to the continued growth of the trade unions in this period.

Yet this powerful force remains completely subservient to the bourgeois political machines, or, more precisely, that of the Administration based upon the "big city" machines of the Democratic Party in the north. But more than this specific subservience in party politics is its general petty-bourgeois ideology and conservative outlook. Its class concepts grow but only against the choking effects of the traditional patriotic, pro-profit system, pro-church, white superiority prejudices that have historically characterized the petty-bourgeois mentality of the American labor movement. However, this outlook is being undermined, pressed back and infiltrated by the growing social consciousness produced by the broad social demands labor is forced to struggle for. This often gives rise to confused and contradictory phenomena characteristic of a deep transition in the mentality of a class, such as the manifestation of race prejudice alongside of the most advanced social demands upon the employer and invitations to the clergy to address meetings of unions famed for their militancy on the picket line and speeches by admirals, generals, bishops, business men, American Legion heads, and Edgar Hoover of the FBI at union conventions that pass resolutions against peace-time conscription, for higher taxes upon big incomes, in favor of advanced veterans' legislation and against stool-pigeons. With the development of a class conscious viewpoint by the American labor movement this confusing performance will be cleared and bourgeois ideological influence in the ranks of labor eliminated.

The struggle to raise the working class to the position of the ruling class requires a complete break with bourgeois ideology, bourgeois political parties and bourgeois politics. The struggle for the class independence of the proletariat is the main strategic aim of our party in this period. This means for the American proletariat in the present period the establishment of a working class political party, completely independent of the bourgeois parties and their reformist followers and agents in the working class. It means, also, the democratization of the existing workers' organizations, the trade unions, the imbuing of these organizations with an uncompromising class line, and the removal of the reformist leadership so that they may become class instruments of the proletariat free from the control or influence of the bourgeoisie and the conservative or reformist labor leadership. Because the party recognizes the profoundly conservative and bourgeois (bourgeois reformist) traditions of the American labor movement, and because the transformation in the class outlook of the unions begins with the broad strata of union activists (stewards, committeemen, rank and file militants, etc.), the party must seek and utilize every opportunity to strengthen the authority and power, both formal and real, of the democratic, rank-and-file-bodies operating in the shops at the expense of the power of the trade union hierarchy which forms a bureaucratic crust upon the labor movement and becomes the transmission belt

for the infiltration of bourgeois ideas among the workers.

Given the extraordinary high percentage of organized workers, the deep-rooted, century-old tradition of unionism, the unique role of the trade unions as the only mass organization of labor and, therefore, the long developed tendency of the workers to regard them as the natural organs of struggle on behalf of their demands and the tendency of the unions, particularly the more progressive ones, to provide services for their members, which in Europe are the function of separate organizations, like workers education, health centers, summer camps, workers sports, women's auxiliaries, consumers cooperatives, and labor cultural activities, it is theoretically possible that, under certain conditions, the trade unions may become a revolutionary instrument and provide the ready-made framework for the establishment of the workers power. The workers councils can emerge from the trade unions either before or after the seizure of power. The trade unions can play such a revolutionary role, however, not as a substitute for the revolutionary party, but precisely under the leadership of the party. It is well to guard against the fetishism of Soviets which conceives of their emergence on the American scene in accordance with the Russian pattern.

The revolutionary role of the trade unions can be realized only if the basis of the latter is transformed into broad, democratic, representative, all-inclusive and all-powerful rank-and-file bodies of workers striving to achieve workers control of production and eventually workers political power itself. Only such bodies can effectively break the stranglehold of the labor officialdom which always drags behind the political development of the workers and seeks to divert it into reformist channels. It is the aim of the party to advance these ideas and to promote the organization of such bodies as indispensable prerequisite to the victory of the proletarian revolution in the form of the power of the democratic workers councils. Hence the need for systematic propaganda and agitation by the party in favor of shop committees, where they do not exist, the increased power of shop committees where they do exist, for the creation of authoritative shop steward councils which cannot be overruled by the local officialdom but are answerable only to the membership, etc., especially in connection with the demand to "Open the Books" to check on production data, labor productivity, etc. as the first step toward workers control of production and the nationalization of industry.

The party does not make a fetish or a ritual of its program for the formation and the power of such factory committees. It does not conduct an agitation for forming new organizations which can only appear to the workers as artificial, or superfluous, or duplicating those organizations which the workers already have at their disposal or which they feel they can easily convert to suit their requirements, as those bodies already exist within the union framework. The agitation and practical work of establishing factory committees independent of the trade union machinery can acquire significance and value primarily under conditions when the more advanced workers, in large numbers, have lost confidence in their existing mass organizations or feel that they are radically inadequate to defend their interests and cope with their problems, or have become a brake upon struggles and their progress. The party does not confine

its struggle for rank-and-file bodies and rank-and-file control to the existing trade unions in all cases even in the present period. It approaches the many possible forms of independent class organization with a flexible attitude. It guards against the sterile and ultimatic concept that the workers must proceed according to our blueprints. It likewise guards against the opportunistic pitfalls represented by the many proposals for measures of labor control proposed by the progressive wing of the labor bureaucracy which are devoid of rank and file power and usually based upon class collaboration. In every critical situation, in every popular struggle against the manifestations of capitalist exploitation, oppression and iniquity the party counterposes to capitalist control, to bureaucratic governmental control, to labor bureaucratic control, the idea of workers control, the democratization of economic and political life through democratic intervention of the people. In the last analysis it is this that constitutes the heart of Socialism, not the outward form of the nationalized economy. All the efforts of the party are directed to stimulating such direct controls by the masses. The best example of this is the agitation for price control by democratic representative bodies of workers and housewives; for rent control by committees of workers organizations and tenants, etc., etc. The participation of the masses in networks of such broad committees of control does not only break the hold of capital upon the economic life of the nation and break-up the bureaucratic apparatus of the capitalist state, but it trains the masses in political and economic administration for the democratic operation of their own workers state and socialized economy.

#### VII. The Transitional Program -- What It Is and How We Use It

It is necessary to restate the point of view that the party holds of the transitional program, first, because there is not enough clarity on this question in the party, and second, because a polemical counterposition has been put forward inside the party and in the Fourth International. The transitional program differs fundamentally from the old social-democratic program of immediate demands, which had only the most formalistic connection with the ultimate goal of socialism but which was in reality not connected at all with the struggle for power. The revolutionary character of the transitional program is based upon the concept of the objective overripeness of capitalism for the socialist revolution and the lagging political consciousness and revolutionary immaturity of the proletariat. The transitional program aims at closing the gap between the two. It is necessarily based upon both phenomena; that is, it aims to seize the workers at their present stage of political consciousness, to participate with them at their present level of struggle, and to move them as rapidly as possible on the road to socialist power. It is a revolutionary program both in that it connects every serious demand and movement of the working class with the question of workers power (the workers government) and in that decaying, crisis-ridden capitalism itself creates the conditions in which every serious demand and movement of the working class raises the question of state power with increasing clarity and sharpness. Precisely because the transitional program has both these aspects, it cannot be concrete without first estimating the stage of development and consciousness of the working class in a

given country at a given time and estimating the stage of development of capitalist crisis in a given country at a given time. Without this, the transitional program ceases to be a transitional program and becomes a ritualistic and sterile substitute for the purely propagandistic advocacy of the old "maximum program" of socialism or the proletarian dictatorship.

The ideas of the socialist revolution must be presented in terms of the actual stage of development of the class struggle and in a way that gives them access to the consciousness of the masses. Otherwise, the masses cannot be approached where they actually are, they cannot be appealed to effectively, they cannot be set in motion as a class from the position they presently occupy to the position they should occupy as the ruling power - in a word, the program cannot serve the function of a transitional program. The program is universal only in that it seeks everywhere to facilitate the movement of the masses to the struggle for power. But inasmuch as the crisis of capitalism is neither as intensive nor extensive in one country as in others, and the stage of development of the working class differs from country to country, the concrete forms of the transitional program, the concrete slogans must necessarily be adapted to the changing conditions and class relations in every country. "In the very nature of a transitional program, of course," says the party thesis of 1938, "it cannot in advance be given final and finished form. With the changes in the mass movement and in the state of mind of the workers, the transitional program must correspondingly change to advance or on occasion to retreat, altering the emphasis and utilization of slogans and shifting tactics through which the program is presented." This is the guiding line which the party followed throughout its existence, i.e., throughout the war. Instead of a struggle under the slogan "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war," the party popularized the slogan "Abolish the no-strike pledge," a concrete formulation of the concept that the class struggle should be pursued by the proletariat without regard to the interests of the ruling class in the imperialist war, a formulation accessible to the level of consciousness of the workers, especially the advanced workers, and capable of setting them into class motion. Instead of a struggle under the slogan "Down with class collaboration," the party popularized the slogan "Get off the War Labor Board," a concrete formulation of the concept that the working class movement should break its collaborationist bonds with the bourgeoisie and its government and act independently as a class. Instead of a struggle under a slogan to break the existing unions or to form Soviets or factory committees, the party popularized the idea of rank-and-file progressive committees in every union, a concrete formulation of the concept of militant, democratic working-class organizations and actions as against the bureaucratic subjugation of the union movement to the bourgeois war machine. Instead of a struggle under a mere slogan of workers power which can itself become an abstraction if there is no instrument with which to achieve this power, the party popularized the slogan of breaking with bourgeois politics and bourgeois political parties by forming an independent class party of its own by means of which it could establish a workers government; and when the first halting, confused and ambiguous steps toward class political action were taken in the form of the CIO-PAC, the party further concretized its concept of the class political independence of the proletariat by popularizing the slogan "Convert the PAC into a Labor Party."

These are not revolutionary slogans in every country and at any time. They are objectively revolutionary slogans in the United States at a specific time, just as at a different stage of development such slogans can become mere reformism. While these implicitly revolutionary demands struck a responsive chord in the consciousness of wide sections of the working class whose militant aspirations were repressed and strangled by the bureaucratic labor lieutenants, and while other sections of the labor movement took up these slogans in one form or degree or another, it was no accident that only the revolutionary vanguard found it possible to conduct a militant and consistent struggle for them in the labor movement and to link them inseparably with the slogan of a workers government as the capstone of the program and as the only sure and durable means of achieving most effectively the aspirations of the masses themselves.

The concretization of the transitional program in the post-war period must follow the same guiding line. This cannot be done without rejecting the concept that the consciousness of the masses in the United States has already reached a high socialist level or that it is even approximately equivalent to the consciousness of the European workers, nor without rejecting the concept that the crisis of world capitalism rages with equal intensity in all capitalist countries or that the United States is today in a pre-revolutionary crisis, i.e. a crisis directly preceding the revolutionary crisis in which the immediate struggle for state power is posed before the masses as a concrete possibility, nor without rejecting the concept of the inherent revolutionary character of certain slogans and the inherent reformist character of all others. These slogans are revolutionary which are capable of setting wide sections of the advanced workers into action as a class against the bourgeoisie and its state, along the road to the seizure of power. Those slogans are reformist which help reconcile the workers with the bourgeoisie and its state, which promote class collaboration instead of class struggle, which deepen the petty-bourgeois illusions of the workers instead of helping to free them of these illusions in the course of their own experience in fighting for even the most modest of progressive class demands. Hence, it is not necessary at every stage of the struggle to put forward "more radical" demands than those initiated by the masses themselves. It is necessary at every stage to urge the masses to fight for their demands by the methods of the independent class struggle, by the most militant and aggressive means, to fight for them with the utmost consistency, and to emphasize at every stage that the effective realization of the aspirations of the masses requires a struggle which cannot but lead to a workers government and socialism. Therein lies the special function of the revolutionary vanguard in the working class and the essentially revolutionary character of the transitional program.

#### VIII. The GM Strike Program: How the Transitional Program Is Applied.

It is false and self-sterilizing to try to impose upon the working class the programmatic formulations which the revolutionary party has arrived at in anticipation of the needs and demands of the workers, or to deal with the hesitations, errors

and illusions of the workers by doctrinaire lectures; it is correct to seize upon even the most confused initiative of the workers when they are actually in struggle with the capitalist class and to give their demands the most revolutionary interpretations, the ones best calculated to heighten their class consciousness and to speed them on the road to workers power.

The program and agitation developed by our party in connection with the demands of the General Motors workers is an excellent example of the way in which the revolutionists can connect the demands initiated by the workers themselves, with all their democratic and reformist illusions, with the transitional program of the party.

The GM program as developed by Reuther does not explicitly break with the traditional reformist, class collaborationist and bourgeois democratic ideology of the trade unions. However, implicit in this program are demands which, if fought for by class struggle methods, lead to a breach of traditional class relations under capitalism and the establishment of the first forms of workers control of production. It was precisely the ability of our party to see through the reformist and trade unionist form of these demands and seize upon their essence, which is thoroughly revolutionary in its implications, that made of this such an excellent example of how to link up our transitional program with the objectively revolutionary demands which an unstable capitalism forces the workers to put forth.

The UAW demanded "Wage Increases without Price Rises" and demanded that prices and profits be subject to collective bargaining along with wages. If Reuther intended this for more than a maneuver to expose the corporations as the source of price increases and thereby win the support of the middle class "public" (an entirely justified and commendable tactic), he certainly did not intend it to go beyond some class collaborationist labor-management set-up which gave the union officials voice in what has hitherto been the exclusive sphere of management. But Reuther's subjective intentions are of little interest to the Marxist party. What is of interest to us is that if these demands were realized by the strike struggles of the workers and under the influence of revolutionary socialist agitation they would create dual power in the factories. It is not the bare form of the slogan "Wage Increases without Price Increases" that is decisive, it is by what methods it is fought for that determines its content - whether reformist or revolutionary.

The struggle for the "GM Program" has shown that it is not necessary to invent programs for the workers. The real ability of a revolutionary socialist party is revealed to the extent that it can take hold of the workers' own program and clarify it to them by drawing to the full all the revolutionary socialist implications of the demands which the workers themselves are driven to raise by the contradictions of capitalism.

The ability of our party to apply the transitional program to the actual issues before the working class was further revealed in the struggle against rising prices, particularly when they rose with crisis speed that threatened to wipe out the

gains of the strike wave. Our party extracted from the GM Program the key concept which links wage increases to price controls by means of workers' committees to control prices at the point of production. The result was that our party was able to base itself upon a key concept that issued from the workers' own struggles and elaborate it into a comprehensive program of price control through independent class action. Taking the GM Program concept as the starting point our price program called for workers committees to control prices on a department, plant, industry, regional and national basis and to extend such controls from the source of raw materials, through the manufacturing and processing stages and down throughout the channels of distribution where it links up with our demand for neighborhood committees of housewives and consumers movements. This program was further rounded out by the demand that wherever contracts are under negotiation workers demand an escalator clause (sliding scale of wages) as a safeguard against further price increases. The latter we raised, however, as a subsidiary, defensive, and primarily trade unionist demand. This price control program of the Workers Party is another example of how to apply our transitional program to the specific issues confronting the working class by seizing hold of that already raised by an important section of the mass movement and elaborating it into a sweeping program of direct workers intervention into the economy through class organs of control.

The applicability of the GM Program, in the form we have presented it, to the many problems confronting the working class in this past period indicates that it will continue to be the essential framework for the presentation of our transitional program during the boom period.

#### IX. Political Re-alignments and the Labor Party

The outstanding political developments since the end of the war are (a) the speeded-up disintegration of the "Roosevelt coalition", (b) the transition of the labor movement from a pro-Administration to an increasingly anti-Administration force and (c) the blind alley of PACism which gives rise to widespread third party demands in the ranks of labor.

The disintegration of the "Roosevelt coalition" was already under way by 1940 but was slowed down by the "national unity" pressure engendered by the war. The 1942 Congressional elections in particular revealed that the Middle Western farm vote and the small town and urban middle class had definitely swung back to the Republican party. The 1944 convention of the Democratic Party showed that the coalition consisted primarily of the reactionary, anti-labor South, on the one hand, and the labor movement (spearheaded by the PAC), on the other, with the Northern "Big City" machines acting as the brokers between these directly antagonistic forces. The coalition could only be maintained by a compromise that placed the latter in control with their choice, Truman, nominated for Vice-President as against the candidates of the two extreme wings, Byrnes and Wallace.

The end of the war and the sharpening class struggles in the form of a succession of tremendous strike waves and clashes



over price control have placed extreme strains upon the remnants of the coalition which indicate that its extremes - labor and the South - will soon be forced to part ways. This process has been accelerated by the inept and clumsy efforts of Truman (as compared with Roosevelt) to hold together these extremes as the indispensable base for a Democratic majority. Truman's intervention in the GM strike with his "fact finding" boards and "30 day cooling off" proposals earned for him the immediate and united opposition of the entire labor movement, including William Green's threat to "follow the British method." However, this storm was a mere prelude to the tempest unloosed by Truman's strikebreaking role in the railroad strike. The latter drove a wedge into labor's relations with the Administration which will have long-term and far-reaching results. It revealed with dramatic and startling suddenness the blind alley into which PACism had led labor when only 10 Congressmen voted against the Truman proposals out of a Congress that PAC had hailed as "pro-labor" when it was elected in 1944 with PAC endorsements. It was this event, also, that unloosed a flood of "third party" threats on the part of the desperate labor bureaucracy and a renewed interest in Labor Party talk generally throughout the labor movement. This development is further spurred on by the need of the bourgeoisie to pass some sort of legislation which will cripple the ability of the trade unions to wage strikes. This need is born of the inability of the bourgeoisie to cope with strikes through the traditional means of thugs, scabs, police, etc.

Every important issue before the present Congress has revealed a consistent line-up of Southern Democrats and Northern Republicans against the Congressmen from the industrial areas (mostly Democrats) who are under the direct pressure of their working class constituents. Just what kind of political re-alignments this presages on the American scene cannot be predicted with certainty because of the many contradictory factors involved. The chief elements are (a) the social conservatism of the Middle Western and Western farmers in this period, based upon the relative prosperity of agriculture, which robs labor of one of its natural allies in the struggle against big capital, (b) the political effects of the trade union organization drive in the South upon the southern Democratic party, (c) the effect of a possible Republican victory in the Congressional elections of this year upon the growing split in the Democratic coalition and (d) the amount of liberal Republican support that develops for a merger with New Deal elements and labor in a third party.

The 1946 elections will take place without any of the questions involved in a re-alignment being resolved. Traditional party lines and traditional tactics will prevail, though it is likely, for the last time. The PAC will make one last effort to elect a "pro-labor" Congress, an effort that is doomed to more certain failure than ever before. The prospects are for a more reactionary Congress than the present one and this development may prove the death blow to PACism.

This situation demands of our party not only the continuation of its forceful propaganda for a Labor Party independent of the bourgeois parties, but it demands more specific analysis of the political alignments taking shape and the specific in-

demonstrated by the objective results of the various political turns made by the Stalinist party.

The Stalinist turns, to the "right" as well as their turns to the "left", cannot be judged by conventional standards. They are not determined, in the first place, by class relations in the given capitalist countries or by the pressure of the masses. They are determined primarily and essentially by the changing political needs of the Russian ruling class. The clearest example of this was the so-called "left turn" of the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries following the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact. This "left turn" did not correspond to a leftward turn of the masses in the democratic capitalist countries or to the leftward pressure of the masses, but solely and simply to the reactionary interests of the Kremlin. However, although these are the interests which determine the turns of the Stalinist parties and their politics in general, the objective consequences of these turns, especially in the working class movement, have an independent significance of their own. Thus, a "rightward turn" of the Stalinists facilitates the struggle against Stalinism conducted by the revolutionary Marxists in the ranks of the working class; a "leftward turn", such as the Stalinists in this country have recently made in accordance with the Kremlin's foreign political needs usually renders more difficult or at least complicates the tasks of the revolutionists in the labor movement, among which is the task of distinguishing ourselves from Stalinism and combatting its influence and its demagogy. This is due simply to the fact that a "more radical" line of the Stalinists makes it easier for them to win, or win back, workers to their banner.

It is important to note that the limits within which these "leftward turns" of the Stalinists are effective in influencing advanced working class elements are being constantly narrowed down by virtue of the growing realization among all sections of the population that the "radicalism," as well as the "opportunism," of the Stalinists has nothing to do with the interests of the working class but is dictated solely by the interests of the Kremlin. In spite of this, the fact remains that the Stalinists have not yet exhausted their possibilities of maneuvering in the labor movement and of deceiving working class militants. The party takes the general position of uncompromising opposition to the totalitarian Stalinist party in the United States. This means that, as a general rule, the party calls upon all workers to fight in every union contest against the Stalinist faction and its attempts to capture the labor movement or any section of it. Save in exceptional cases, as for example where the opposition to Stalinism is composed of reactionary, fascist, anti-Semitic or racketeering elements, the party follows the policy of joining with all genuine working class elements, primarily with the progressives and militants, against Stalinist leadership or Stalinist bids for leadership.

In the political field, again save in exceptional circumstances, the party follows the policy of opposing candidates running for office on the Stalinist ticket. In both the trade union and political fields, we base our opposition to support of the Stalinists on the ground of our opposition to a totalitarian, anti-democratic and anti-working class agency of a reactionary,

despotic foreign power.

For the same reason, as well as for the practical reason of its utter impracticability, the party does not make proposals to the Stalinist party leadership for united front activities, even though it favors participation in genuine united fronts of the working class and its organizations in which the Stalinist party may be a part. However, this attitude toward the Stalinist party cannot simply be duplicated in the contact and relations into which we enter, and must seek to enter, with rank and file Stalinist workers. It is not only permissible but in many cases necessary not only to approach these workers with the most friendly and sympathetic attitude but also to propose joint actions with them on a shop or local union scale on concrete issues of the day. Such joint actions can be proposed especially under those conditions, and in such a way, as is calculated to deepen the latent conflict between the working class and socialist aspirations of the Stalinist workers and the anti-working class, anti-socialist aims and policies of their party, and to accelerate their break with Stalinism in the direction of revolutionary socialism. In the case of joint actions with rank and file Stalinist workers or with groups of Stalinist workers or Stalinist sympathizers, the principles, methods and tactics of the united front retain all their validity and remain in full force. Our struggle against Stalinism in the labor movement, of which joint actions with rank and file Stalinist workers wherever possible is one part, can be effectively carried on by counterposing to the Stalinist defense of Russian imperialism our demands for democratic rights and national freedom, by counterposing to Stalinist bureaucratism in the unions the demand for workers democracy, by counterposing to the Stalinist policy of maneuvering, intrigue and collaboration with bourgeois politicians and bourgeois politics our program of independent, democratically-organized and controlled working-class political action, etc.

#### XI. "Operation Dixie" and Its Far-reaching Political Significance

The campaign of organized labor to organize the South cannot be considered as a routine recruitment drive or as an accidental, temporary and inconsequential phenomenon. There are deep and powerful driving forces behind it, and correspondingly it will have deep and powerful effects upon American politics and American social development, as well as upon the development of the struggle of the Negro people in the United States for full social equality. The labor movement, its officialdom included, have had their attention forcefully called, in recent times, to the inseparable connection between economics and politics, between trade union struggle for wages and the political struggle for influencing and controlling the government. The so-called shield of the labor movement, the New Deal section of the Democratic Party, has been repeatedly pierced and shattered by the reactionary Bourbon section of the Democratic Party in the South, which exercises an increasing influence not only in the party but in the national legislative bodies. This Bourbon wing joining or joined by the Northern Republican reactionaries systematically cancels out or threatens to cancel out in Congress all the gains that labor makes or tries to make in the economic field.

Hence, the organizing drive of the CIO (and, to an extent, of

the AFL) in the South.

It is of symptomatic significance that this has not been and is not conceived of as a simple recruiting drive. The CIO organizers are either at the same time organizers for the PAC or act as trail-blazers for PAC organizers. Although for the time being, in its political aspects, the CIO-PAC drive in the south may be considered as a last desperate effort to keep the Democratic Party "on the side of labor" and thus avoid the organization of an independent political party by the workers, the fundamental hopelessness of this reactionary aim signifies that this new and massive political intervention by labor in the South can only widen and nationalize the future basis of an independent labor party. The significance of the drive is, however, greater even than this.

It is absolutely impossible to think of organizing the South into the labor movement without organizing hundreds of thousands of Negro proletarians and semi-proletarians. The CIO in particular has demonstrated that the type of organization it carries on and the type of industries which it seeks to organize make it impossible to maintain the traditional Jim Crow barriers in the union movement which the AFL has so long maintained in the South. The destruction of the Jim Crow barrier inside the labor movement, once it is established in the South - and it can be established only in the course of the most savage and violent struggles there - is the beginning of the explosion of Jim Crow throughout Southern society.

By the same token the organization of the Negroes in the South into the CIO cannot but have the most revolutionary consequences for the development of the Negro people and their struggle. At the present time the Negro people in the United States is politically more or less homogeneous. Unlike the population as a whole, it is not divided into class organizations. This is not a sign of the political advancement of the Negro people but of its political and social backwardness. The unity of the Negro people as a whole, a people which is overwhelmingly plebian in social composition, is absolutely justified in the struggle against white imperialist oppression. The unity that exists today is, however, an expression of the backwardness of the Negro people.

The indispensable prerequisite to a fighting unity of the Negro people on a progressive and effective basis is the political and "organizational" differentiation of the Negro people into class organizations, tendencies and movements. In the course of this differentiation the Negro proletarians, allied with the white proletarians, will be in a position to take the leadership of the whole Negro people, a leadership without which the struggle of the Negroes for equality is doomed to petty-bourgeois ineffectualness, capitulation, or outright sterility. The unity of the Negro people, in other words, can and must be established first by the separation of the Negro people into class movements and then by its realliance under the leadership of the proletariat.

From the standpoint of this perspective and this necessity, the CIO drive into the South is of the most vital and even of historic importance for the development of the class struggle in the United States and for the development of the struggle of the Negro people for equality.

For the same fundamental reasons the party, while supporting the struggle, no matter how limited, of the Negro people today in the direction of social equality and against white oppression, seeks at all times to separate out of the Negro people the Negro proletarians and to help organize them into their own class organizations or into organizations in which their class leadership is firmly established. Only by proceeding with this fundamental conception is it possible for revolutionists to join and participate in the work of the present-day bourgeois or petty-bourgeois Negro organizations. Any other analysis or approach to the Negro question in the United States leads to opportunism and helps delay the crystallization of the Negro proletarian leadership which, allied with the proletarian movement in general, is alone capable of fructifying the democratic struggle of the Negro people as a whole against white oppression and for full, unrestricted social equality.

## XII. The Application of the Political Line in the Coming Period

Though the presentation of our line in the mass movement, general party agitation and Marxist propaganda interrelate and overlap, it is necessary that the party clearly understand the points of emphasis in these three general spheres.

The political line, as translated into Marxist politics in the mass movement, revolves around two key concepts - the party's elaboration of the GM strike program and the slogan of "Turn the PAC into a Labor Party."

These two concepts are put forward under these slogans:

For the GM Strike Program!

Wage Increases without Price Rises!  
Open the Books! For Workers Inspection and Control!  
For Workers' Control of Prices at Point of Production!  
For Price Control Committees of Housewives and Consumers!

For an Independent Labor Party!

Against Government Strikebreaking!  
Against the Anti-labor Offensive in Congress!  
Turn the PAC into a Labor Party!

These two concepts can serve as our most effective vehicles in approaching the masses. Because in our understanding and use of them, they are imbued with a solid revolutionary socialist content, they become intimately related with the general agitation of the party.

The key questions on which this agitation must be concentrated are:

Workers Control of Production,  
Nationalization of Industry,  
For a Workers Government,

and such specific issues as housing, peactime conscription and

militarization, the atom bomb and the war danger, the fight for Negro rights, the veterans, the native fascists.

In promoting its agitation and energetically pursuing a course of putting its political line before the working class, the Party remains vitally conscious of the requirements of revolutionary propaganda and education from the point of view of Marxist theory. In seeking to build the revolutionary party of the American proletariat, the Party establishes the indispensability of an educated vanguard. The field of Marxist education and propaganda is vast, and the Party proposes to ignore no section of it. However, given the special needs of the Party at this stage, and the fact that these needs have been neglected in the past for a variety of reasons, special attention must be specifically given to the following, particularly in the expanded LABOR ACTION and in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL:

The Truth about Russia (wages, terror, trials, etc.)

W.P. Position on Russia (theory of bureaucratic collectivism)

Stalinism as a World Movement (nature, methods, aims, etc.)

Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Question

Political Events in Washington

Statification of Economy

Basic Sociological Trends in U.S. (shifts of population, industries, income groups, education, regional studies, etc.)

Changes in American Economy (effects of New Deal, war economy, relations of banking to industrial capital).

### XIII. Conclusion and Summary Statement

Just as in its international relations the course of victorious United States imperialism will be wracked by crises and conflicts no less serious in their sum than those that produced World War II, so will the sparks of class conflict and economic cycle in the United States itself expose the inner core of capitalist instability. American capitalism may achieve a surface stability, certainly in comparison with the rest of the world over a great part of which it stands as master. Beneath that surface, however, the explosive elements of capitalist chaos, imperialist rivalry, class warfare and international discontent are easily discernible.

Alone among the capitalist nations, the United States is today capable of continuing the wartime economic revival into a period peacetime boom. But the economic energies that were released by the war's termination are paralleled by the class energy of the American proletariat. Vigorous economic actions,

as characteristic of the American working class as its political backwardness, will be particularly characteristic of the period ahead. To translate this class vigor into political independence is at once the great need of the American working class and the particular responsibility of revolutionists. Linked with this responsibility are opportunities of genuine dimension. The party proved its revolutionary measure and its distinctive ability to convey the transitional program into the specific context of the American life during the war years. With a membership deeply rooted in the factories and unions, and armed with the transitional program the party has every reason to face the period ahead with confidence in its growth and the reception of its program.

The coming period will be one of great preparation for the future.. The party must learn how to apply its transitional program in the light of the coming class battles and learn how to link them to the immediate needs of the masses as well as to our ultimate goal which is the establishment of a socialist United States.

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