

B U L L E T I N

on the

Labor Party

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C O N T E N T S

The Problem of the Labor Party.....Paul Temple
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THE PROBLEM OF THE LABOR PARTY

Paul Temple

PART I.

THE STATUS OF THE LABOR PARTY QUESTION IN THE PARTY

The first thing which needs to be made clear at the present moment is the status of the Labor Party question in our movement. This first Part will be concerned solely with this, and with related questions of methodology, in order to reopen the discussion in the Party ranks.

Too many comrades are under the impression that the Labor Party question is one that has been "settled" in the party; of course it can be reopened and re-settled, but then it would simply be a matter of re-affirming or rejecting a previously "settled" position. Such is the opinion.

It is not true that this is the status of the question. The issue before the coming Convention is not simply to reaffirm, re-adopt or reject an existing party document or position.

The Convention has to adopt a Party position.

---"What! Don't we now have a Party position on the Labor Party?!"

Yes and no.

We have a Party policy: For the Creation of an Independent Labor Party. That is all we have, strictly all.

That does not yet add up to a party position on the question. Or to put it in other words: the eight words above constitute a political conclusion but not an analysis, a theoretical motivation, an exposition of our political approach to the Labor Party issue.

For example: We do have a party position on the nature of the Russian state. It is contained in a resolution which gives a theoretical analysis and political motivation for the conclusion that Russia is a bureaucratic-collectivist exploitative state. The convention can either reaffirm or reject it -- but there is no doubt that it exists.

The same is not true with respect to the Labor Party question. Only the conclusion exists. The documented position does not exist.

It is the duty of the NC to present this convention with such a position, and of the convention to adopt it or reject it in favor of another.

--- "But the Party has a documented position on the Labor Party; it has a theoretical analysis and a political motivation!!"

Where?

--- "Why... in the 1938 resolution of the united SWP, which our party carried over with it after the split."

Yes, this is the only document to which the party's present party policy can be referred. If this is pointed to as expressing even the fundamentals of our present theoretical analysis and political motivation (even with the legitimate proviso that naturally it has to be "brought up to date"), then the opening remarks of this article are at least 50% wrong.

I have nevertheless ventured those remarks because I do not believe that this resolution will today be defended either by the majority of the NC as a whole or by Comrade Shachtman in particular. That is to say -- it has been scrapped. And if this is not so, I should like that fact to be made very clear.

The Judgment of Events on the Party Resolution

Why do I consider it fairly safe to say that this original (and still formally effective) 1938 party resolution will not be defended?

Primarily, for a simple reason: because it is indefensible. It will be more than sufficient to prove the almost-complete incorrectness of

- (A) its analysis of the political situation;
- (B) its methodology and the theoretical bases of its argument;
- (C) its predictions.

Points A and C have already been admitted by Comrade Shachtman. During the faction fight in the SWP which led to the split, Shachtman made a report to a Minority Caucus meeting at Stuyvesant Casino, New York, on March 17 in which he discussed the objective validity of factional points of view. He chose as his illustrative example the previous Labor Party discussion, and I quote his hindsight on this point verbatim: (Emphasis in all quotations is mine unless otherwise noted.)

"I regret to say that Temple was indubitably right in saying that no real movement existed for a Labor Party [in 1938--PT]. Some factional viewpoints are immediately confirmed; others take time. In the case of the Labor Party, it took one or two years to prove our analysis incorrect.

"The question of a Labor Party can still be debated -- that is to say, was it correct to advocate it at the

time. As for myself, I am quite willing to say that Temple was indubitably correct in analyzing the movement for a Labor Party."

This demonstration of candor is not just an incidental admission. As I shall show, the nature of the 1938 party resolution was such that its analysis of the political situation ("proven incorrect") was crucial, decisive and vital to its theoretical method and to its conclusion. Take out of it this "proven incorrect" analysis of the then situation, and literally not a sentence nor a phrase remains which even purports to give a reason why revolutionary socialists should work for the creation of a Labor Party.

This does not settle the Labor Party question -- far from it, as Shachtman correctly notes. All it settles is the 1938 resolution itself. But this happens to be THE party document upon which the present LP conclusion of the party is founded!

A re-examination of this basic document is therefore necessary, and it has the further advantage of being illuminating.

The Basic Party Resolution on the Labor Party Question

This resolution is unknown to many party members and forgotten by most others. I must therefore resuscitate it from the Undead.

The heart of this resolution is contained in one passage, to which I wish to devote my main attention. But in order to present the contents of the resolution fairly, and in order to bring to the party's attention the whole of the resolution which is supposed to be guiding its political action, I shall summarize the context in which this passage appears, together with notes on the methodology displayed by its formulations.

(1) This document was in 1938 presented by the NC as a kind of "rider" to the Transitional Program then also proposed; and its opening passage correctly points out

"the inadequacy of the purely economic struggle to solve even the most pressing immediate problems of the workers."

Why? Because the economic decline and social crisis cancels out any strike gains and even threatens the union movement's existence. Therefore the tendency of the masses to turn to political action.

Neither here nor at any other point is the next obvious question asked or answered. Economic action cannot solve "even the most pressing immediate problems of the workers;" only political action can. AGREED. But what kind of political action can do this? CAN A LABOR PARTY?

If the American Labor Party will likewise not be able to do this, why usher in the resolution with this "radical" phraseology? And if the authors believe that it will or can solve the workers' problems, it would aid the discussion if they would only vouchsafe

us. their opinion.

But there is no answer. There is no attempt at an answer, you understand, not even an unsuccessful one. Having correctly raised the basic question, the resolution apparently considers its concrete application to the Labor Party as unnecessary. This is known as window-dressing.

(2) In 1937-38, the new Labor's Non-Partisan League was flourishing. The resolution describes it as a "systematic and increasingly determined effort to organize and mobilize the political strength of the workers as a single unit." This was true. It is also as true that the same description applies to the present Political Action Committee of the AFL and CIO. Both represent systematic efforts to organize and mobilize the political strength of the workers as adjuncts to the capitalist political machinery.

But that is not what the enthusiastic LP proponents saw. To them, the LNPL was "a profound departure from the old Gompers school of labor politics" -- no less -- "although on the surface [profound people!] the two may appear to be identical." What precisely was the profound difference? It seems it was this: Gompersism endorsed this or that faker and let it go at that; the LNPL endorsed this or that faker and then set about systematically organizing the workers to vote for said faker as a "friend of labor." Do you see the profound class angle?

Yes, in 1937-38 many workers were once again awakening to their political strength. That is why the LNPL was formed, and the New York ALP, and today the labor political action committees. Labor unawakened can be adequately taken care of onelection day without any special apparatus. The ward machine will do. Awakening labor has to be bridled and saddled.

(3) There is a profound impulse -- says the resolution -- of the masses of workers towards completely independent political action. It adds: "This impulse is progressive."

An absolutely incontrovertible statement. As indisputable as Trotsky's observation that workers' patriotism based on a hatred of Nazism conceals a healthy and progressive impulse behind it.

Note it conceals it, it distorts it, while at the same time riding on the back of it. Does the channelization of this impulse in the famous Labor Party fructify and stimulate this progressive impulse, or does it too conceal and distort it while riding on its back?

No answer. It is enough to wax enthusiastic about the progressive "impulse." The reader's subconscious is depended upon to bridge the gap from the "progressive impulse" to the "progressive Labor Party."

(4) The indicated reservations are made. We must head off the danger of a bourgeois Third Party being substituted for a "genuine" Labor Party. We advance the program of transitional

demands "in order to fructify the mass movement in favor of a Labor Party and lead it in a revolutionary direction." The party preserves its own full organizational and political independence. We struggle against and expose the trade union bureaucracy, the Stalinists, etc., who want to prevent the creation of a Labor Party or to head it off toward a Third Party. Our party "does not and will not, however, take upon itself any responsibility for this Labor party." We occupy a critical position in it.

So goes the resolution, and further remarks on these codicils are reserved since they do not affect the basic motivations advanced.

Some Predictions -- by "Realists"

(5) The last sentences of the resolution are noteworthy:

"In its very essence the Labor Party can preserve progressive significance only during a comparatively short transitional period. The further sharpening of the revolutionary situation will inevitably break the shell of the labor party and permit the SWP to rally around the banner of the Fourth International the revolutionary vanguard of the American proletariat."

This was written five years ago. A world war has broken out, the U.S. has entered it, and we are now in the midst of it. This eventuality was not mentioned in the resolution, or rather only hinted at in the passage quoted above. Does this paragraph now have force -- or does a Labor Party first have to be created before the Labor Party idea can possibly lose progressive significance? Fuller discussion of this aspect too I reserve from the present. The pro-LP majority have reserved it since the outbreak of the war.

(6) There are four unqualified predictions put forward by the resolution, all integral with the general outlook of the document. As Shachtman noted, all four were 100% wrong.

Prediction No. 1:

"The further development of the crisis is certain to strengthen this tendency [toward labor political action]."

As a matter of record, the high point of the Labor Party movement was past, not long after this prediction was voted to be "certain" by a majority of hands, and the Labor Party movement since has not even approached it.

Prediction No. 2:

"This new movement, represented by the LNPL, must be characterized as a stage in the development of the labor movement from complete subservience to the poli-

tical parties of big capital, to an independent party of the workers."

But the (official) labor movement is today at a peak of complete subservience to the political parties of big capital. --- "But that is because of the war!" --- Yes, yes, it is because of the war. An annoying interruption, this war, to the proper "stages of development"! Even leaving all mention of it out of the Labor Party thesis and ignoring it didn't stop it from interfering.

Prediction No. 3:

"The powerfully developing trade unions under the conditions of a developing crisis of capitalism will project themselves all the more irresistibly upon the road of political struggle and upon the road of crystallization into a Labor Party."

But the trade union bureaucracy will oppose it? The resolution has the final and boldest secretarying to offer.

Prediction No. 4:

"Nevertheless we can with sufficient assurance predict that the resistance of the bureaucracy will be broken. The movement in favor of a labor party will continue to grow."

The opposition of the bureaucracy to a real independent labor party will be "broken" by the aroused rank and file, who will drive ahead to this political break with capitalism over the heads of their reformist leader. This was the prediction. Forbearing to rub salt into the wounds of the seers, I merely ask: Would not this anticipated event both require and constitute a "further sharpening of the revolutionary situation" -- and to an epoch-making extent? A phenomenon such as is here confidently predicted does not happen every Monday in the relations between the rank and file and its reformist leadership!

But "the further sharpening of the revolutionary situation", i.e. the intensification of class struggle, i.e. the deepening of the workers' militancy, i.e. the prerequisite for "breaking the resistance of the bureaucracy to a Labor Party"..... why, that is precisely what "will inevitably break the shell of the Labor Party," is it not?

No, this is not a contradiction. The resolution has unwittingly blundered into the truth of the matter. Insofar as the workers drive toward really independent class political action, insofar as they really move into making a real political break with capitalism (naturally, over the heads of their reformist bureaucracy, of course), insofar as this happens the basis for a Labor Party is broken!

The conditions necessary for real independent class political action are precisely what make the "Independent Labor Party" a fantasy.

The Motivation of the Party's Labor Party Document

But these remarks in the resolution are mainly incidental. The resolution's main job -- it had to be -- was to give some kind of answer to the question why the party was changing over from opposition to and exposure of Labor Party politics, to a pro-LP position. It had to make a stab at a political justification and motivation. The following served. I quote the passage in full:

"At the time of our national convention, we took insufficient account of the new developments in the labor movement, especially in their political aspects, and fell into the error of repeating abstract formulas on the question of the Labor Party which, in the light of great new developments, had become obsolete. It is necessary now to reconsider the question and to make a radical change in our tactics in regard to the developing Labor Party movement. Over a period of years we have discussed and debated this question with the opportunists only in the abstract. That could not be otherwise, because neither a Labor Party nor a formidable movement for its creation was anywhere to be seen. In these discussion we saw only two aspects of the question -- a Labor Party which did not exist in reality, but which the opportunists sought to suck out of their fingers, or a possible fully developed Labor Party some time in the future. We now have to gear our practical activity toward a third and hitherto insufficiently APPRECIATED ASPECT OF THE QUESTION--- namely, a powerful mass movement in the direction of a Labor Party which has not yet taken a clearly defined shape. We have always said that, confronted with a fully developed Labor Party, based on the trade unions, we would take a positive attitude toward it and most likely participate in it. We are now confronted with the necessity of concretizing this general point of view and of taking a direct part in the present developing movement for a labor party and of working with all our strength to push it on the road of independence."

Boiled down, then, it amounts to this: We must change our negative position towards the Labor Party question, which was determined by the absence of a practical mass movement which made it a practical problem. Now there is a mass movement and it is a question of our party's participation among these masses and influencing their course.

The Abstract Formulas

Our previous anti-Labor Party analysis, which had been rather fully elaborated in theoretical, educational and agitational documents, receives its due meed of notice in the above document... two words. These are: "abstract formulas."

Thus - literally thus - were close to ten years of theoretical and political analyses disposed of. Outside of what I have quoted, there was never another word written in reevaluation of the point of view which was in the process of being given up. Indeed Cannon went so far in 1938 as to limit his "refutation" of the concepts he was then abandoning to the calling of them --

"abstract formulas which remain unassailable from the point of view of principle but outworn by events."

In "principle" or something, the Labor Party is reactionary, a bureaucratic strangling of real independent political action -- but this is abstract now, for -- don't you see? -- there is now mass sentiment for this reactionary set-up.

What were these "abstract formulas" which the movement had held to, and which were so obviously merely abstract that a vigorous two-word cuss would dispose of it without the necessity of further discussion?

Part II of this article will present this view in detail; but in the interim I invite the reader to study twice over the excerpt which is appended at the conclusion of this piece. It is a presentation in unequalled manner by Max Shachtman in the New International of March 1935, entitled "The Problem of the Labor Party." It is reproduced for our own archives of the revolution, not in order to counterpose Shachtman to Shachtman, but to allow the reader to judge whether it has been disposed of, by the 1938 party resolution or since then, by the appellation "abstract" or by ignoring it.

The flinging out of "abstract formulas", however, served a purpose. It made it unnecessary to say "We were wrong and we are now reversing our position." God forbid! I have already quoted Cannon's delicate way of handling this situation. Ah, but Cannon -- we all know him. Well, then, Shachtman?

Shachtman's main written document on the LP question was (and still is!) and W.I. article by himself and Burnham, August 1938. What did he have to say on this point and on the former position of the movement?

Are we reversing our position, at least changing it? Horrid word. He corrects the horrid word "change" to....an "amplification of the tactics pursued by the revolutionary Marxists in this country"! And he makes everything clear in the only other passage where he handles the point: "Our analysis was incomplete" (emphasis in the original!).... "not sufficiently clear," it merely requires "supplementing". This makes it easy as ABC.

Before, we were against calling for a Labor Party. Now we "amplify" this -- into support.

Before, our anti-LP position was "incomplete", lacking something. Lacking what? Why, a pro-LP position, naturally.

Before, we were clearly against creating a Labor Party; but this wasn't sufficiently clear, so to clearup the matter we come out for creating a Labor Party.

With this abracadabra as their method, neither Cannon nor Shachtman, following the strictest logic, found it at all necessary to say a word in criticism of the set of ideas they were in the process of rejecting; (not "amplifying"!).

I have here attempted to explain WHY such a criticism was never made, never essayed. It is necessary because there is an understandable tendency among people to refuse to believe things which appear incredible. And it is almost incredible that the Labor Party line of the party was adopted, and has been maintained, with never, at any time, written or spoken, a single word purporting to show why analyses like Shachtman's 1935 piece are false and mistaken.

We come then to this: The analysis made by the pro-LP majority was "proven incorrect". The analysis of the minority was "confirmed". The theoretical motivation of the majority (as expressed in its resolution) consisted in toto of this incorrect analysis. The theoretical motivation of the minority HAS NEVER EVEN BEEN ASSAILED (let alone its being "unassailable in principle")

Comrade Shachtman and those who agree with him still have this challenge before them. I suggest they take Shachtman's 1935 article as their mark. It is eight years old; let them examine its predictions as well as its theory.... The party resolution's predictions -- everyone of them from the first page to the last-- were proven incorrect; the prognosis of 1935 can sit beside the realities of 1943 without a blush. The "abstract formulas" must have had something.

On Overlooking Mass Movements

I have shown that the pro-LP majority based its case, not upon a criticism and revision of its previous political concepts on the LP question, but on the claim that those previous concepts had flowed primarily from the lack of any mass movement for a Labor Party; that it had somehow failed to take this eventuality into prior consideration. It would seem that before 1938 it just had never occurred to us as even a hypothetical possibility, let alone a reality.

As the party resolution put it: "In these [previous] discussions, we saw only two aspects of the question" -- namely, nothing at all stirring on the LP front, or else a finished Labor Party; and it was therefore that we overlooked adopting an attitude toward any intermediate state.

Or as Shachtman-Burnham put it in their 1938 New International article:

"Our [previous] analysis was incomplete, and in some respects, not sufficiently clear. It did not al-

low for the present stage of development, in which an undeveloped and only partly conscious mass movement exists and is torn by warring tendencies of progress and reaction but is not yet crystallized... In brief, our old position cannot and does not effectively answer the problems raised by the present stage of development. It cannot even in theory, for the reason that the new situation was not clearly allowed for." (Emphasis in original.)

The reader can convince himself that this is the sum total, the alpha and omega, of their answer to the Shachtman of 1935 by securing the article itself.

This polemical doodle -- the allegation of this peculiar oversight -- is not even a legitimate mistake. There was hardly a time before 1938 when the movement debated the LP question with another political tendency but that it had to face, take up concretely and analyze this "third" aspect which (Shachtman later told us) it "never saw". We had to take it up during the stay of the Trotskyists in the Socialist Party, when Labor Party agitation was developing, especially in the advancing CIO, and the socialist centrists cast this up to us.

As a matter of fact, the 1935 article by Shachtman was written DIRECTLY on this "unforeseen" third aspect -- in DIRECT, explicit answer to the problem which the Shachtman of 1938 blandly claimed had never crossed his mind!

In 1935 the Communist Party changed its line, from against to for the creation of a Labor Party. Browder made a speech explaining the change in line. Was the CP, by chance, reversing its views on this question? Oh no, explained Browder. Why then the change in "tactic"? Shachtman quotes Browder:

"We must change our negative position towards the Labor Party question, which was determined by the absence of a practical mass movement which made it a practical problem."

Shachtman comments:

"But it was determined by exactly opposite considerations in 1930; the mass movement was indeed there..."

Browder, continued:

"Now there is a mass movement, and it is a question of our party's participation among these masses and influencing their course."

And Browder again:

"There does not yet exist a clearly defined Labor Party movement. There is only the beginning mass break-away, within which a struggle is going

on between two main class forces."

It was on this speech that Shachtman wrote his article. It is obvious that the theoretical motivation of the party resolution is -- not similar -- but identical as two peas with Browder's political explanation. I do not cite this as necessarily damning evidence against the former. But conversely, the mere fact that it was Browder putting it forth did not damn it in our eyes either, then. Shachtman had to analyze it and tear it to shreds politically.

One can go further. Shachtman quoted above referred to the "mass movement" for a Labor Party which existed in 1930. The same 1935 article goes into the most detailed discussion, however, of the previous experience of the American revolutionary movement with the Labor Party question, in 1922-23. Shachtman writes of this period:

"In 1922, the just organized legal communist party (the Workers Party) put forward for the first time the slogan for a Labor Party and launched a campaign to realize it. The reasons for the new policy were four-fold: (1) there was not only a strong Labor Party sentiment among the workers, but a national Farmer*Labor Party, strongly supported by many trade union bodies, actually existed; (2) the railroad Brotherhoods, together with other national unions and farm organizations, had launched the Conference for Progressive Political Action in Chicago in February 1922;...

"Easier to understand in retrospect than to have perceived it at that time, the so-called Labor Party movement developed simultaneously and in significant combination with the so-called Third Party movement. The former may be summed up as the first post-war reformist political expression of the discontent of the workers with the capitalist regime of its two parties, dissatisfaction with the hoary official policy of "reward your friends and punish your enemies," a groping toward independent working class expression on the political field... Anxious to break with the sectarian past of their underground existence, apprehensive lest they remain isolated from the political development of the masses, the communists flung themselves into the campaign for a Labor Party, with a rising overestimation of its hold upon the masses, its distinctive class character, its possibilities and its virtues."

This was a living mass movement for a Labor Party, fully equipped with progressive "impulses," stronger than anything which has hit the American working class since.

And it was mainly on the basis of the lessons of this experience with a mass movement that the Trotskyist movement developed its anti-Labor Party analysis! It played the same role for the movement in this respect that the Chinese Revolution or the Anglo-Russian Committee did in more important regards. Yet

comes 1938 and another upsurge of Labor Party sentiment, and Comrade Shachtman tells us that "we saw only two aspects of the question", and that we never allowed for this "unforeseen" development, not even in theory!

The "Mass Movement" Theory and the Methodology of Opportunism

All this would be quite useless to recount if it were merely water under the bridge. But here is the disturbing fact:

The state of the party's political thought on the Labor Party question is EXACTLY the same today as in 1938.

Trotsky said that a good housekeeper does not permit cobwebs to accumulate in her house, nor dare the party permit cobwebs to remain in its theory. One may get too used to cobwebs as a regular part of the furnishings.

The worst theoretical education our party has ever received was the campaign of the Labor Party advocates to convince it that the existence of widespread sentiment for a Labor Party was adequate and sufficient reason for OUR support to this aim of Labor Party organization, and that it even made a negligible bagatelle of the serious analysis we had previously made, and which many continued to make, of the meaning of Labor Party organization.

Within the ranks of the party, this type of methodology is translated in cruder terms.

"I spoke for a Labor Party in Local Umpteen and boy, did it go over big!"

"Look at the union resolutions for a Labor Party. There's the issue for us!"

"Here's a positive proposal we can make on a union floor." ("Positive" in this vocabulary defines a proposal to solve the problems of labor which large numbers of them are at present ready to accept.)

The Labor Party proposition can in some cases be a good talking point in a union. Since this is a fact, and since our party members are not sectarians, this makes it legitimately attractive to all of us. And it is true that this attractive advantage has been more effective in convincing comrades of the "correctness" of the Labor Party policy than all the attempts at theoretical rationalization by the supporters of it. This method of deriving political line from tactical opportunities is alien to Marxism -- it is of course the methodology of opportunism -- but it has become possible for a number of comrades on this question because it is given factitious weight by the kind of argumentation employed by the party resolution and the political leaders of the party.

The existence of a workers' mass movement for ANYTHING, a mass sentiment for anything, is an impressive fact. In absolutely no case can it fail to affect our political activities. There is one thing it cannot do: prevent us from asking "Mass sentiment for WHAT?" and beginning our analysis with this question.

There is or was working class mass sentiment for the war against Hitler Germany. On the basis of theoretical analysis and political motivations, we adopt our own attitude toward the war. In the peculiar vocabulary of a Labor Party enthusiast, it is not a "positive" one. It is also unpopular, let us say. It is likewise often difficult and not infrequently impossible to give an adequate presentation of our view on a union floor. In many cases we have had to "sit out" discussions bearing upon it. We trim and adapt the form and emphases of our political agitation.

That this sad state of affairs does not feaze us determines the Marxist character of our party. Our attitude was expressed by Trotsky:

"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 yourself from fascism.'... The reformists have a good smell for what the audience wants... 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...'"

But after ten years of saying "We do not want to see the creation of a Labor Party" and of arguing why, we were told: "There is now mass sentiment for a Labor Party, and that is why WE have to want it also."

Mass Movements and the National Question -- A Case in Point

Our attitude on the war is one type of Marxist reaction to the existence of a mass sentiment. It is Case I, where we deem the goal of this mass movement to be objectively reactionary, and therefore merely trim our sails to the effects of this sentiment.

We do not have to go far for an example of Case II, where we deem the goal of the mass movement to be objectively progressive, and are therefore spurred into activity by it in order to push it the faster toward its progressive end.

The NC resolution on the National Question in occupied Europe emphasizes the fact that national liberation is the basis

of whatever there is today 'in Europe of a workers' mass movement. That means that we therefore support this movement? NOT SO FAST!

Between the fact of mass sentiment and the conclusion of support is an entire resolution which goes from one to the other by giving a theoretical foundation and a political motivation for three not-inconsequential premises for that conclusion. They are:

- (1) There is a real question of national liberation involved in the European situation today, not just an imperialist-conceived demagogic slogan. The resolution considers it necessary to prove this with some detail.
- (2) We are for the aim of national liberation, which if and when achieved would have a progressive effect on the class struggle for socialism. The NC recognizes the need for proving this with argument, theoretical considerations and political analyses.
- (3) The struggle for this aim is one which leads to breaking the workers away from capitalism and toward the socialist revolution.

Having first established the above, the NC's emphasis upon the existence of the mass movement in Europe and the necessity for the vanguard's participation is a model of Bolshevik strategy. And as against Comrades Johnson, O'Connor, etc., it is trebly important to emphasize the significance of the European mass movement inasmuch as in words they subscribe to Points 1, 2, and 3!

BUT on the Labor Party...

Before 1938, we had already analyzed the meaning of the mass "impulses" for a Labor Party that had cropped up? -- No matter; there is now another mass impulse.

Before 1938, we had already said that a Labor Party would be reactionary? -- No matter; it never occurred to us that mass sentiment for a Labor Party might precede its finished formation.

Before 1938, we had said a Labor Party would be an obstacle to breaking the workers away from capitalist politics? -- No matter; their "impulse" is progressive, so the Labor Party itself must be too.

Before 1938, we had said that a Labor Party that would really be independent of capitalist politics was an anachronistic fantasy? -- No matter; it's a good talking point.

Before 1938 we had said that it is our business to combat the Labor Party illusions of the workers? -- No matter; we must not be "negative".

A Challenge

The 1938 party resolution represents the present status of the Labor Party question in the party's theory -- as it exists in authoritative documented form. Scrapped though in effect it was not long after it was passed, its methodology and conclusions lived on. It is dead; but it walks abroad in the pages of Labor Action, and periodically clanks in a given section of the current Political Resolution* It is the zombie resolution of the party. What it needs is either a soul or a stake through its heart.

We have a right to demand that the pro-Labor Party leadership of the party present a documented theoretical and political analysis and motivation for their position, in opposition to the previous analysis of the Trotskyist movement (as represented by Shachtman's 1935 article) and to the present analysis of the opposition in the party. I shall not murmur at the absolutely inevitable flinching of "sectarian," "isolationist," and "negative" in the direction of all points of the compass, provided that this exercise follows, and does not substitute for, such a motivation. I should like to reduce somewhat the present figure of from ten to fifteen different (and in half the cases, mutually exclusive) theories evolved by comrades in justification of the Labor Party line, for lack of a party analysis.

If Comrade Shachtman or any other authoritative spokesman for the pro-Labor Party policy finds it possible to take up this challenge, this Part I will have achieved enough of its purpose. The succeeding sections of this article will deal directly with the analysis of the Labor Party problem itself.

*See Page 19 for omission

 From

THE PROBLEM OF THE LABOR PARTY
 by MAX SHACHTMAN

(New International, March 1935)

(The following presentation of the Marxist position follows a detailed critique by Shachtman of the CP's claim that the "new" existence of a mass movement for a Labor Party requires them to come out for a Labor Party also; in particular it follows a detailed account of the lessons of the 1922-23 Labor Party movement.)

What appears to us to follow plainly from the experiences of the past, substantiated also by what can be seen in the country today, is the following conclusion:

There is no room in the present conditions of the class struggle for the stable, unartificial existence of a "class Labor" party (to say nothing of the fantastic two-class "class Farmer-Labor party) which is distinct from a third capitalist party as well as

from the revolutionary party of the proletariat. The only genuine labor party is the party of revolutionary Marxism. Past experiences in this country--not to mention the experiences in other lands!--show that the evolution of the British Labour party, namely, its degeneration from a great progressive force which separated the proletariat politically from the bourgeoisie to a reactionary obstacle to progress which ties the proletariat politically to the bourgeoisie is accomplished in the United States under conditions of capitalist decline in a far more telescoped period of time.

To attempt to foist upon the American revolutionary movement the obsolete advice given by Engels to the Marxist emigrants in the United States of fifty years ago, and to conclude from it that it is our task to found a Labor party now, is to do violence to the whole spirit of Marxism, is to ignore the tremendous changes that have taken place throughout the world (the United States not excepted) in capitalism, in the labor movement and in the revolutionary movement. Lovestone, for example, is perfectly willing to start at exactly the point where Engels left off in his letters to Florence Wischnewetzky in 1887, as if nothing had happened since that time!

The attempt, in theory and practice, to force the American working class, in 1935, to go through a faithful, mechanical repetition of every stage through which the British working class was obliged to pass at the beginning of the century, is to reveal a blatant ignorance of scientific socialism and the laws of development of the labor movement. The British Labour party rose and was an indisputably progressive factor in the working class in the period of the rise of capitalism. Not only was it a "unique party", a bloc of organizations, with no program of its own, with no special discipline, with liberty of agitation for revolutionary groups within it, but, like all the reformist parties of the Second International before the war and regardless of how defectively, it contributed to the historical advancement of the proletariat as a class.

Conditionally, Lenin considered it possible even after the war to advise the British communists to seek affiliation with it because of its "unique" character, even though he emphasized that properly speaking it was a bourgeois party of workers and not a proletarian party. The opportunists are aiming to make it a "real party with local organizations and a program", argued the Communist International in Lenin's time, to "create a large opportunist party which is to retard the revolutionary development of the masses. If this tendency were to succeed, the Labour party would never afford the socialist organizations which form part of it the right to an individual communist policy, nor to the propagation of the revolutionary struggle. It would bind their freedom of action hand and foot. It is thus evident that no kind of organization seeking to carry out a communist policy could possibly belong to the Labour party. It would then become necessary, after a most energetic struggle against this tendency, to leave the Labour party and to endeavor to keep in touch with the working masses by means of increasing the communist activity in the trade unions, by detaching these trade unions from the Labour opportunist parties and persuading them to go over directly to communism". (The I.L.P. and the Third International, p. 53)

As what would the American "Labor" party start: as the British Labour party of 1906 or or 1935? Closer, far closer to the latter

data and condition than to the former! We mean of course a genuine "Labour party, that is, a reformist party, with a reformist program, with a reformist leadership, and with the reformist unions (organizations, not individuals) at its base--assuming that one is to be established. Would such a party, in view of the British experiences and what we know to be the situation in this country, be of a kind that would meet the requirements for affiliation by a revolutionary Marxian party set out in 1920 by Lenin? In all likelihood, No. In any case, the attitude of the revolutionary party towards a genuine, mass "Labor" party would have to be determined not by what it may or may not be if and when it is formed; not by what we would like to have it be, but by what it would be once it was formed. For, it is not the business of the revolutionary Marxists, above all in the present stage of the relationship between capitalist disintegration and social reformism, to initiate or to help organize and found in addition to their own party another party for the "second class citizens", for the "backward workers", a "Labor" party, i.e., a third capitalist party, even if composed predominantly of workers.

Wherein would that golden-haired dream child common to the aspirations of Louis Waldman, Norman Thomas, Jay Lovestone and Earl Browder differ fundamentally from a "Third party", say from the 1924 LaFollette party or the Farmer-Labor party of Minnesota? In respect to program? Leadership? Composition? Methods? Goal? It would be interesting to learn what the concrete and detailed difference is presumed to be in all five respects!

Whoever hopes to establish or invent an essential difference is simply disregarding the unambiguous lessons of the past. What was clearly revealed more than ten years ago gives no reason for pessimism. It was not proved that the working class and even the farmers must inevitably fall under the influence of petty bourgeois demagogues of Third partyism in the struggle for hegemony between the latter and the revolutionary Marxists. Not at all! What was proved is that in the battle between the revolutionary party and the third capitalist party for the support of the masses who are breaking away from the old bourgeois parties, the slogan of the "Labor" party--or even the slogan of the "mass, class Labor party" (whatever that is)--does not possess sufficient class vitality or distinction from the Third party to make it possible to wean the masses away from the latter by means of it. That vitally important task can only be accomplished under the banner and on the fighting program of the revolutionary proletarian party. Not, it goes without saying, by mere recruiting campaigns, but by the concrete leadership which such a party is able to offer the workers (in contrast to the petty bourgeois politicians and the trade union bureaucracy) in the course of their daily struggles for immediate demands.

The Labor party is not an abstraction; it must be considered concretely. Assuming that it is formed in the United States (and its creation is by no means a foreordained certainty, an inevitable stage the American workers must experience before they can think of revolutionary struggle!), it is more likely than not that it will take shape as a directly anti-revolutionary (ergo, anti-progressive) party. With a stormy forward march of the American masses, in the course of which they may skip "stages" with even greater ease and speed than their Russian brothers, the petty bourgeois reformers plus the social and trade union bureaucracy might conceivably form a "Labor" party

for the express purpose of thwarting the progress of the working class. These pseudo-revolutionists who are so frenziedly anxious to see a Labor party in the U.S. so long as it looks something like its British predecessor, undoubtedly have some "exceptional" surprises in store for them.

We speak of course of a "Labor" party in the true sense of the word. If it does not greatly resemble the fantasmagoria just brewed out of the witches' cauldron of Stalinism, that is hardly our fault, for such a "Labor" party as the C.P. now proposes to inflict upon the proletariat, never has been and never will be seen by God or man or beast or the elfin folk who see pretty near everything. "There is only one revolutionary party," declares the Daily Worker (February 16), "and that is the communist party." So the Labor party will be reformist? No, it continues. "This does not mean that the Labor party that the communists propose would be reformist." Then it would be revolutionary? No, answers Stachel, "the Labor party is not a revolutionary party" (loc. cit., p. 19). Not revolutionary, not reformist! Won't this be a creature compared with which a live-historic ichthyosaurus would deserve as much attention as a sparrow? Then what will it be? According to Stachel again, it will be nothing more or less than "a genuine Labor party". A barrel of tar would be dearer than a Stalinist explanation. And what is its function? It will, to return to the Daily Worker, "lead the masses in their struggle for immediate demands.... Communists will point out to the workers that their revolutionary program is the further development of the minimum policy of the Labor party. They will always advocate the full revolutionary program of the communist party". If this Galinathias means anything, it is that there is to be a strict division of labor: the Labor party is to lead the workers every day in their struggle for all their immediate demands--that's its job; the C.P. is to lead the workers on the day of the insurrection--that's its job. Whence it is clear that neither separately nor together are they capable of leading the workers in any struggle. According to Stachel, (p.16), who drips light with every drop of ink, this Labor party, which is not revolutionary, it is true, but not reformist either, which is to exclude the trade union bureaucrats, Sinclair, Olson, the S.P. bureaucracy and even the Lovestonites, which is, in a word, something we'd give a pretty penny to see in the flesh--will "really carry on the struggle for the workers for wage increases, for the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, for the 30-hour week without reduction in pay, for the needs of the farmers, for the rights of the Negro masses, for the right to organize, strike, etc., against the growing menace of war and Fascism"! The Labor party that carries on a struggle (and a real one, too) against war and Fascism! If it can do all this (and probably other things as well), what worker will ask for more? What will be his need for the communist party? What indeed?

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*OMISSION FROM PAGE 15

This is well illustrated by the Political Resolution of our last National Convention at the end of 1941.

It repeats the introductory statement of the 1938 resolution: Economic action cannot solve the workers' problems; unless the working class turns to political action, it will be self-defeated. This is elaborated in one page of the Political Resolution.

All this, of course, is the common stock of the movement, and (except for its terminology) would meet with no opposition even from the leaders of the AFL and CIO, who especially at present are really keenly aware of the problem. (The AFL Metal Trades paper on the West Coast runs about one article a week making the same correct point; the West Coast "Shipyard Worker" (CIO) has come out loudly for "independent political action"--by which they mean independently organized trade union support to the Roosevelt administration.)

So working class political action is necessary. What is this political action?

We say: Socialist political action alone can solve the impasse of labor. That is our conclusion.

Says the AFL and CIO leaders: "Systematic and determined effort to organize and mobilize the political struggle of the workers"--behind capitalist fakars. That is their conclusion.

Says the Political Resolution: An independent Labor Party. That is its conclusion.

The Political Resolution of 1941 of course makes no attempt to justify its own conclusion as against the others. I say "of course" because one should not necessarily expect this to be done in one page of a general Political Resolution. This manner of presentation of the Labor Party line in this document is legitimate since it should have the right to assume that the theoretical foundation for its summary view has already been laid in the original 1938 party discussion and resolution. Only....far from being laid there, it was laid to rest.

There is no whisper of the fancus "mass movement" for a Labor Party in the 1941 document. I repeat: only the methodology and conclusion of the basic 1938 party resolution remained.

A LABOR PARTY AND A LABOR GOVERNMENT

American labor has undoubtedly been pondering labor's situation and prospects as it never before weighed its political and economic future. Labor has no choice today but to plan its future to survive the attacks of a ruling class aiming to smash or weaken the labor movement; and to achieve its own salvation. But Labor cannot think and conduct itself as, in the main, it has in the past. Without an independent class orientation in all respects, Labor faces a menacing future.

Therefore, Labor's policy and program for today and tomorrow require a complete social-economic-political program versus the program of the American imperialists. The conditions have been maturing to impel the workers independently onto the political field, not necessarily on a national scale by 1944, but possibly in important instances on a local scale. Today, very large numbers of the working class are ready to consider practically the steps necessary to emerge with a Labor Party.

Many factors enter into a consideration of the perspective emergence of the American proletariat on the scene as an independent factor. The Political Resolution describes and analyzes the major ones. In relation to the Labor Party question itself, I am indicating here some of the factors which bear concretely on the possibilities for a Labor Party in the next period.

LENGTH OF THE WAR

1. Our views on the war's duration and the form of its end, help to determine our political analysis and perspective. Insofar as the war is concluded on an imperialist basis, our perspective accepts the certainty of the United Nations as the imperialist victor. A conception of an indefinite productive expansion of American economy based on a prolonged and indefinite continuation of the imperialist war would be wrong.

The data already shows the great uncertainty and instability of American economy in the midst of the war itself (for example, market fluctuations at every slight turn in the military struggle and immediate contractions in production or plans for production).

It is desirable, from the standpoint of evaluating more accurately Labor Party prospects; to have a judgment on the remaining duration of the war. Thus, I think the war in its European phase will be concluded in a "short" span; that is, one year, more or less within months; and that the effects in the Pacific will be sharp with respect to the general termination of the war. The early independent political transformation of the masses is predicted, organizationally, on a conception of a remaining "short" war. Indefinite prolongation of the war would not retard development of consciousness of the masses. For instance, the labor leadership has successfully utilized the war "emergency" to sidetrack the immediate formation of a Labor Party.

ROLE OF U. S. IMPERIALISM

2. The greatly sharpened role of American imperialism domestically and internationally cannot but affect the political course and fortunes of the American workers, as well as the peoples of other countries.

On the international front, America's role demonstrates itself more and more to be reactionary and counter-revolutionary. American imperialism will continue to use liberal phraseology and professed liberals to carry out its aims of subjugating the world; hindering the economic revival of devastated Europe and Asia; and bringing Latin-America completely under its whip.

"Free trade" and economic expansion (with or without the baloney of the 4 Freedoms) are meant primarily for the benefit of American capital, whether put forward by Willkie as "economic internationalism" or by Roosevelt-Hull-S. Welles as plain free trade. Unimpeded by the workers either of America or Europe, American imperialism, no less than Hitler, would endeavor to turn the rest of the world (industrialized but smashed European economy and relatively undeveloped Asia) into agricultural and raw material hinterlands for America.

At one time American workers might either have given no attention to the course of American imperialism; or might have assumed they would receive a "fair" share of American super-imperialist profits and disregard the extreme exploitation of their fellow workers in other lands.

Today, American workers are wary or afraid for themselves of American capitalism's "internationalism" and expansionist policy. This negation of imperialism will express itself as labor more widely proceeds to fight the bosses to maintain living standards, and also in a more organized impulsion toward independent political action.

AN UNSTABLE ECONOMY

3. American bourgeoisie and soothsayers (Wallace, et al) still make big promises and offer great hopes for an expanded and constantly expanding economy. No doubt large numbers of the capitalist class and also parts of the working class, are looking chiefly at the productive capacities of American capitalism and are not inspecting too carefully the contradictions of the productive forces with the aims of capitalist production. Thus, they have hopes or illusions for a relatively stabilized post-war capitalism of some duration at least. We have to tell the workers clearly is the actual case and what is our attitude.

Our view is that American economic stabilization and an expanded American economy are far less possible in the post-war II period than in the period following World War I; and that the future will not witness a long prosperity such as preceded the 1929 debacle.

This increasing instability is certain because of the limitations for successful expansion and the investment of capital; the effects of technological developments; the uncertainty of profits; and political uncertainties in regard to domestic and world developments. Moreover, as America either endeavors or finds it necessary to feed the world on a rationed basis,

and finds it necessary to exert military and police force to maintain its domination, uncertainty and doubt will increase within the bourgeoisie themselves.

The problem of technology alone is a first class headache for the capitalist class, precisely in relation to labor, since their introduction intensifies class antagonisms and the general chaos of the capitalist order.

All these factors contribute to a swift change in the political physiognomy, movement and organization of the American working class. All these objective factors, it will be said, have been present before in greater or lesser degree before the war, and yet they did not produce a national political movement or Party of labor. The distinction and difference, however, is that never have these factors been so great or deep-going; and the Second World War and its devastating consequences had not taken place. Now let us look at the Labor Party question and see how it must be approached in the light of the present and developing conditions.

WORKERS OUTLOOK CHANGED

It would be a mistake of first magnitude to be taken in by the fact that the masses don't speak up too definitely or sharply during the war itself. Out of various considerations for their immediate security and well-being, this is understandable. (On the economic front, the bourgeoisie's "national unity" is on occasion drastically upset by the workers' pressing needs -- e.g. coal miners, other "outlaw" strikes, etc.). There is, however, a need to recognize that the gap that actually exists between the labor leadership and the rank and file is much greater and deeper than we have yet expressed -- probably because we don't have all the information. When the post-war social crisis develops and hits the masses again, this wide gap will express itself in the unions and outside the unions; among the unemployed and elsewhere. A correct estimate of this gap will be decisive in the tasks the Party sets forth, engages in, and the reception they meet among the workers.

Expressed in another manner, the outlook of the broad masses of people today, in America as well as Europe, is far removed progressively from that of the people of the 1914-1918 period on all significant political and economic questions. This means that wide numbers in the next period will, in their own way, though still far from using Socialist terminology at all, be attracted by the Socialist program. Will the demagogues and reformists succeed in side-tracking the workers' independent social and political aspirations again? This is also entirely possible. We can, however, partly side-track the side-trackers by knowing more surely to what increased degree the workers are ready to accept our message, such as our transitional program and the socialist philosophy.

We do not want to delude ourselves, of course. At present, one cannot

see the actual formation of a national labor party for the 1944 elections. The labor leadership appears successfully to have scuttled its immediate formation and put over a qualified "support Roosevelt" policy. Yet this does not decisively change the effective propagation of the Labor Party slogan from the standpoint of developing wider consciousness for independent workers politics. Probably, if and when a check-up of the labor press throughout the country is made, we would discover that a very considerable sentiment for a labor party exists. In any event, it is necessary to stimulate local initiative for independent participation in the 1944 elections.

LABOR PARTY--A MOVEMENT

5. In our Party there are some who still dispute about the kind of Labor Party that can be formed today; and who also object in principle to our advocacy of such a body at all. However, more than ever, we must recognize that whether the Labor Party will be more or less revolutionary, or more or less reformist, is not the question.

The Labor Party today particularly cannot be looked upon in a static manner. The Labor Party is not a fixed organization or a party that functions like a revolutioner party or any other individual membership political organization. The Labor Party, while it is an organization with a program and goal, is, more importantly, a process, a movement. As the masses, consciously and unconsciously, get into motion toward a revolutionary goal, comrades who talk mechanically about the impossibility of advocating a "reformist" or in-between party in a period of capitalist decline and sharp fluxes, will only miss the boat. This is the case even though, in the main, the immediate and transitional demands that we advocate can be carried through only by a revolutionary Party. The latter lesson is one that the masses must and will learn by their experiences in conflict with the employers and the capitalist government. We are advocates of the Labor Party, not only as a tactic, but because we view the Labor Party as a historic movement which today must move toward our line.

Nor is it for us to debate any specific aspect or plan of the labor Party. The Labor Party program will develop in accordance with the developing consciousness of the masses. Therefore, too, we cannot quibble about what constitutes a "mass Labor Party" and a mass revolutionary Party. We are for both. There is no incompatibility if we see both the political movement and the organizations as a process, and clearly distinguish and visualize the Labor Party as a broad political current from which large numbers can pass over to our Party and help build the mass revolutionary Party.

LABOR PARTY MUST AIM FOR POWER

6. We must advocate the Labor Party with a more precise conception as to the tasks of the Labor Party. Thus we call upon the workers to form a Labor Party that will aim for early Governmental power in order to resolve their most pressing needs of every description. At present, too, many of

the advocates of a Labor Party see the existing and potential Labor Party organizations as 2 by 4 outfits that will probably go on for a long time in piddling participation in Local elections and possibly in some States. To see the national possibilities of a Labor Party in the coming period, it is necessary to understand the effects of the war and the situation in the post-war period which will impel the masses toward independent political action.

There is implicit recognition of Labor's role when Ammunition, monthly organ of the Educational Department of the United Auto Workers Union, writes that the greatest hope for the future of America is that "labor is beginning to organize politically on a big scale." When this "big scale" political organization of labor assumes independent political form, American labor will come of age, and Ammunition's hope for America can become reality. There is not mere wishful thinking in such declarations. They are only reflections of a deep current in American labor seeking a way out of the economic and political dilemma.

We ourselves must first see the Labor Party as a party of Power, not too far in the distance --- a real competition of the capitalists for power. Thus, today, (not only at election times but all the year round) we must center our work in the Unions, in the factory, in our Press toward a Labor Party, in order to distinguish ourselves in life, in practice as genuine workers for the Labor Party. Our advocacy of any real progressive development for the masses can only redound to the political and organizational prestige of the Workers Party. A sectarian outlook on this question may seem revolutionary. But it will only isolate our small Workers Party--whether we have 40,000 readers of Labor Action or 100,000. The masses can and will distinguish us from the actually false--the reformists and centrists--only if we have been in the forefront of the mass political movement, even as we endeavor to be in the forefront of the workers in their economic actions, strikes, union efforts, etc.

From the foregoing it follows that the Labor Party program, whatever are its component parts, must as a whole be a program setting off the needs and aims of the workers from the capitalist program. It is not necessary here to enter into detail on the economic, social and political proposals relating to national and international needs that a Labor Party must put forward. Certainly these proposals must include economic protection: opening of factories closed down by the bosses; under workers control; a vast housing program; an agricultural program; and definitely a specific program for the Negroes, soldiers, youth and women. Particularly must the returning young soldiers be won to support of an independent political movement of the workers. The importance of the women, youth and soldiers to any workers political movement is indicated by the following figures. The number of women in the trade unions since the war has increased 1200%---from a quarter million to 3,000,000. While only 10% of the whole population belong to Unions, 25% of the men in the armed services are union men.

NEED FOR NEW KIND OF GOVERNMENT

7. The Labor Party bases its main program and appeal on the industrial proletariat. However, as a necessity today, the Labor Party program must be such as to appeal also to all workers and small farmers, the petite-bourgeoisie, etc., as against the program of the big capitalists. Our own members in the future must more and more find themselves involved in political action and activity of this broad scope. To assure such a direction of our tasks, it is necessary to conceive of the Labor Party movement as one which thinks and aims to set up a Labor Government and workers power.

Mobilization for a Labor Party in this period in the United States cannot be looked on merely as the projection of the masses into independent parliamentary political life. The struggle and movement for a Labor Party brings into question the backward, the incompetent, the class nature of the existing capitalist government and the need to have a new kind of Government, a labor government. It is granted that a Labor Party, once formed, may degenerate into parliamentarism. However, we are here concerned with the process and basic reasons for forming a Labor Party. As a partial remedy for routine parliamentarism by a Labor Party, our agitation stresses and calls upon the masses to back up the parliamentary activity of the Labor Party through direct action (strikes, etc.) whenever necessary.

What is fundamental in the propaganda for a Labor Party is that it must have as its point of departure for the development of the masses the question of the early formation of a Labor Party - a Party which aims to become the Party of power now. Frustration in the movement toward that goal can only accentuate the importance and necessity for the revolutionary Workers Party.

TRENDS

8. Even as we visualize and work for the formation of the independent political movement of the workers, so we must also realize that a counter-political movement, fostered by a section of the bourgeoisie, will emerge in the post-war period. Thus, we can expect the crystallization of a fascist political movement, possibly the formation of a political party of fascism itself, indigenous to America. This would represent the counter-movement of reaction to the movement of the masses toward a Labor Party. Apart from incidental manifestations, bourgeois reformism will be ineffective in the post-war period. The turn of sections of the bourgeoisie toward Right political movements will increase, with the object of beating down labor and regulating inter-capitalist relations. It is to be expected that a Fascist appeal will be made to and find good soil among returning soldiers, and also in the middle class, the unemployed and other elements. Since we conceive of a social crisis in the post-war period, relieved only by brief periods of "prosperity" but of increasing uncertainty for the masses, we must expect the bourgeoisie to resort to more desperate measures of all kinds to maintain their domination.

One of the major factors in relation to the prospective role of a Labor Party is mass unemployment. What does it mean? The masses, first, cannot and will not depend on the employers to assure their minimum of existence. The masses today will turn insistently to the Government at Washington to help resolve their predicament. It is possible, but impro-

table, that in the immediate post-war stage, the Government will resort to the tough methods of Herbert Hoover and General MacArthur (who shot down the bonus marchers.) Nevertheless, conciliatory or other procedure notwithstanding, the capitalist regulation of unemployed needs is going to prove much harder because of the enormous costs; the mounting national debt, and so on. Note the kick downstairs given to the National Resources Planning Board, whose plan was largely a post-war dole, for an indefinite period. The unemployed will look to the Government, not to the employers, for aid in the next period, despite the hullabaloo of the National Association of Manufacturers, etc. that they will take care of the workers and unemployed after the war through full-blown "free enterprise" economy.

The unemployed issue, therefore, will tie up with our Labor Party propaganda and agitation to a degree not even remotely paralleled heretofore. Capitalist government, reformist or hard-boiled, will fail the workers. On this issue alone, the objective pressure of the situation can impel the workers to a sudden, sharp shift and a dumping overboard of bourgeois parties. As Trotsky has shown, great objective pressure and necessity can change overnight the political backwardness of great masses into political consciousness.

Thus the Labor Party issue can fast become very real. We must anticipate this development and find ways and means to prevent the labor leadership from again side-tracking the rising movement. We must not be misled by the fact that the unions are not today voting overwhelmingly to form a labor party nationally. That would be to see the formal surface only and not the working class getting set for faster motion.

That is why, too, we have to consider again more certainly and concretely what we want and expect of a Labor Party; what are its tasks and role; and what are or may be our political and organizational relations to it. We must view the prospective development of a Labor Party as one of the important bridges whereby much wider numbers of the workers cross over to the revolutionary Party itself. For all these reasons, therefore, the Labor Party must really become the central theme in all our propaganda and agitation for the next period.

It is necessary to add and conclude with one more observation which gives a significant impulsion to the prospects for the earlier, rather than belated, formation of a national Labor Party. The analysis of the Political Resolution of the Plenum takes particular notice of the increased stratification of economy. Increased state monopoly or nationalization, or more precisely at this stage, the sharply increased and increasing State intervention or Government controls in the processes of production, automatically and graphically raises the question of the State Power. That is, what class is to control the powers of Government. It is, therefore, even more necessary now to relate the question of the Labor Party to the concept of a Labor Government in the coming period, and to formulate our conception and program of the Labor Party accordingly. Thus, too, the present character and function of capitalism in the form of a growingly dominant state monopoly capitalism must be presented precisely to demonstrate the need for the solution of the social crisis through State power of the workers.

THE LABOR PARTY PROGRAM AND THE MARXIST PROGRAM

The transitional program is the basis of the activity of the Workers Party.

The transitional program aims at mobilizing the proletariat for the proletarian revolution and, with the developing maturity of the proletariat, this is more than ever the task of the Workers Party today. It is necessary, however, to understand the differences between the Transitional Program of 1938 with the imperialist war as a perspective, and the Transitional Program today when the end of the most decisive phase of the war is in sight.

The Transitional Program in 1938 was written when the productive forces of America were more or less stagnant and the army of unemployed was like a dead weight around the neck of the proletariat. The program was written at a time when all revolutionary situations on an international scale - French sit-down, strikes and Spanish revolution - had failed. The Fascist counter-revolution was firmly in the saddle and winning new ground.

The present adaptation is written while a world war is raging. The imperialist conflagration is teaching the proletariat through their bitter bloody experiences, more thoroughly than any revolutionary organization can through agitation and propaganda. The origin of Fascism, its barbarism, and its bankruptcy as a solution of the problems of society, have been exposed so that the most backward can understand.

The present program is written when experience has shown that 20 years of Italian Fascism had not destroyed the heroism, vigor and aspirations of the Italian proletariat.

The present program for the American proletariat is therefore written in order to direct its maturing class consciousness to begin a world of planning for full employment, to build a world free from want and to make the 20th century the "century of the common man."

The advocacy of a Labor Party which will begin the reconstruction of society, however, immediately poses the question of the relationship between the Marxist program of the W.P. and the program outlined above for a L.P.

The W.P. in advocating such a Labor Party does not in any way moderate its propaganda and agitation for socialism and the building of a Bolshevik organization. Digging itself into the day to day struggles of the masses of the workers, it seeks always in the true spirit of the Transitional Program to draw attention to the connection between the day-to-day struggles at the point of production and the seizure of these means of production by the proletariat. This it shows to be the indispensable basis for the full attainment of those aims which the day to day struggles can at best only partially realize.

While in the very immediate perspective the proletariat and the party will be preoccupied with the problems of the war, already the problems of the post war are forcing themselves on every section of the population. Here as everywhere the party must take the lead,

THE LABOR PARTY PROGRAM AND THE MARXIST PROGRAM (2)

In the present stage and more particularly in the immediate probable development, the class-struggle in America is likely to offer exceptional opportunities. In its day to day agitation and in its press, the party, on the basis of its concrete experiences, draws the full conclusion warranted by them. At the same time it uses these to illustrate from the lessons of history, particularly of the last 25 years, the fundamentals of Marxist political education.

Yet the main political task of the party for the next period must be the agitation for a Labor Party of the kind described above. It is important to grasp the connection between the W.P. and Labor Party programs. What is decisive in all political agitation is the stage of consciousness of the masses and the particular organizational form and direction in which their minds are concretely moving. In Russia in 1917 the Bolsheviks called for all power to the Soviets, organizations led by Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionists. The revolutionists have always been ready to advocate power to the traditional social democratic parties. In France the Bolshevik-Leninists raised the slogan of a Blum-Cachin government to carry out the demands of the masses, despite their ceaseless exposure of the treachery of the Social Democracy and the Stalinists. The Bolsheviks have always given to these mass organizations their own Bolshevik program, since the immediate program of a revolutionary organization is not their property but that which they wish the masses to follow, no matter who puts the program forward.

All such agitation, however, is legitimate and in fact not dangerous only if at the same time in the party press, in its general propaganda and particularly in the education of its membership and its immediate circle of sympathizers, who have to advocate its policy, the fundamentals of Bolshevism are continuously explained and adapted to the concrete situation. If the Labor Party is for the masses a bridge toward the revolutionary struggle for power, the agitation of the Workers Party for a Labor Party is a bridge for the more advanced workers to the principles of Bolshevism.

Agitation only on the program of the W.P. and a slurring over or disregard for the agitation for the L.P. is sectarianism. A broad agitation for the L.P. which is not done within the content of Bolshevism must degenerate into opportunism. The concrete task of politics is to be able to combine the two in a concrete and developing situation. It is necessary in this connection to outline the possibilities of development of the American working class during the next period. It must be borne in mind, first, that such is the national and, particularly, the international situation, that the party must now be prepared for sudden, rapid and dramatic developments in the class struggle. Yet the probability is, barring unforeseeable developments on the labor leadership and the Stalinists between them will be able to canalize the broad feeling for independent political action into an actual if somewhat critical support of Roosevelt in the 1944 elections. However, though the working class may support Roosevelt, this would not alter and may in fact under certain circumstances even accelerate its growing militancy, the consciousness of its fundamental demands and its determination to secure them. The quadrennial presidential election is likely to concentrate the minds of the proletariat politically on the election of 1944. But immediately this is over the proletariat is likely to think far more in terms of direct action until such time as another election approaches. Concrete prediction in all these matters is

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bound to be the merest guesswork, particularly with the world situation as it is. The thing to do is to watch the rapidity of the trends and the potential explosiveness of the situation and to make program and policy accordingly.

The agitation for a Labor Party properly carried out must be looked upon not in the purely organizational sense "for the forming of a L.P." but must be regarded as a major means for helping the working class towards the realization of its ultimate goal.

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