

BULLETIN

THE LABOR PARTY, OLD AND NEW.....J. R. Johnson

THE LABOR PARTY - A RESOLUTION.....Paul Temple

January, 1944

INTRODUCTION:

The following document was presented to the National Committee during the discussion on the American question. The writer believes that it will form a contribution of importance to the membership in the party discussion on this question. He has not attempted to change it in any way except to make a few corrections here and there. This accounts for the form in which it appears.

J.R.J.

I. The Bourgeoisie and the State

1. Profits

For a quarter of a century before 1914 the socialization of production, in the United States as elsewhere, led to the domination of trusts. In Europe by 1914 the consummate expression of this was the international cartel. After World War I, the crisis of 1929 and the preparation for World War II led to the super-imposition on the cartel system of gradual and increasing state control of the whole national economy. Whereas immediately after World War I private capital rapidly disembarassed itself of the economic control assumed by the state during the war, the increasing socialization of production during the last quarter of a century and the rapidly changing social consciousness of the masses of the people, make it impossible for private control ever to resume the position of domination which it formerly held. The statification of the economy in the interests of private profit is the inevitable trend of the developing capitalist economy. World War II has completed this process of statification, in the United States as elsewhere. Whatever retrogression may take place state control is now and will more and more obviously be the axis of economic, political and social struggles in the United States.

During the years 1939-1943 the state has become the greatest single capitalist owner in the country.

It now owns one-fifth of the nation's manufacturing plant, most of it concentrated in the new industries which promise to occupy a key position in the economic world of the future.

The government today is the nation's biggest customer.

Whereas in World War I only a quarter of the national production was purchased by the government for the war machine today more than 50% of the entire industrial output is manufactured at the government's orders. This has led to extreme centralization of the economy so that almost 50% of government contracts are in the hands of a few giant corporations. Moreover, by means of allocation of raw materials, its control of agricultural production, priority ratings and price fixings, it has over-all control of the entire economy.

Private capital recognizes that the material and technological superiority of the government's capital, coupled with the enormous control and authority which it already exercises, create the greatest danger that it has yet met to its undisputed sway. Through Jesse Jones, one of its spokesmen in the government, private capital has already laid claim that this vast industrial empire be diverted into private hands and used not for the benefit of the masses of the people, but subordinated to the interests of private profit. Yet whatever agreements the bourgeoisie as a whole may come to on the disposition of the government-owned capital, it will not alter the fact that there are serious differences between the bourgeoisie as to the future of American economy. One section, as represented by the N. A. M., wishes to drive the government out of industry, as much and as quickly as possible, to lower wages and thus raise profits. It proposes by old-fashioned expansionism and pre-1914 imperialism on a global scale to restore the expiring "dynamism" of American capitalism. Neither in its imperialistic aims nor in its internal economic policy has this grouping the slightest chance of making a success of its plans. In even through the Republican Party, it should come into power, the whole internal economic and social situation will compel it to exercise the very state control which it now theoretically opposes. To this grouping there is a pronounced fascistic

wing composed of the representatives of heavy industry, for example, Ford, and expressed in the activities of the McCormick press.

The other section of the bourgeoisie is represented by the New Deal bureaucracy in Washington. Rooted to the capitalist system and yet distrustful of it, it lives in mortal fear of fascism on the one hand, and the working class revolution on the other. It proposes by public works and fiscal manipulation to offer to the capitalists on the one hand, guaranteed markets and guaranteed profits, and to the workers on the other, the maintenance of wages, democratic rights and the extension of social insurance. Thus it hopes to maintain economic stability and social peace, not forgetting emoluments, power and patronage which it has accumulated and hopes to extend. But the sharpening of the internal class struggle and the world situation drives this group to increasingly reactionary steps. When Roosevelt formerly incorporated Republican political leaders (Knox and Swinson) into his administration, he now incorporates actual members of the capitalist class as paid functionaries of the state. The war has resulted in a big increase of the personnel of Big Business in the Administration. A Rockefeller in charge of Latin American affairs, the victory of Jones over Wallace, the appointment of Harriman as ambassador to Russia and, most important, of Stettinius as assistant to Hull, indicate that if not by victory of the Republican party at the polls, then by infiltration, the personal and direct representatives of Big Business will increasingly handle the controls of the state economy.

But the same capitalist contradictions which left the U.S. with 10 million unemployed after seven years of the New Deal are now operating with infinitely greater force, and these will not be substantially changed by a victory of 1944 either of Republicans or Democrats. The social character of the productive forces, the result of the socialization of production, shifts power to administrative boards, controlling all economic and social relations. Congress is reduced more and more to being a registrant of decisions and a sounding-board for propaganda and agitation. The bourgeoisie is determined to control these boards in the future. Thus, whatever its different sections may have in their heads, the objective movement of the economy and the need for profits will compel even the most fanatical advocates of a return to private capitalism to suffer, if not advocate, a widening interference by the state in the normal economic life of the country. This, clear to the bourgeoisie today, will be clear to the people tomorrow.

The bourgeoisie, foreseeing an early end to the war in Europe, is already negotiating for reconversion of industry to peace time production and cancellation of war contracts with large advantages for itself; the economic consequences of demobilization with which these are related are entirely beyond the capacity of private capital to handle. In these problems which will dominate the immediate post-war period, all major decisions will be in the hands of the state.

2. The Class Struggle

The bourgeoisie recognizes quite clearly, however, that after the demonstration of the power of production afforded by the war, it must solve the problem of unemployment or face the social revolution. But savings, boom due to delayed consumption demand, delayed demobilization, public works, all these are ultimately powerless before the contradiction between the vastly increased productive power and the limitations of the capitalist market. Whatever their plans, the bourgeoisie will be compelled to turn more and more to

the government. But it cannot merely offer charitable employment to the working class. In capitalist society, whatever steps the government may take to regulate capital must be accompanied by and inevitably lead to government regulation of the independent activities of labor unions. At present this is done by public pressure upon labor leaders under the slogan of national defense. But, coupled with open measures like the Smith-Connally, there is an unceasing series of administrative decisions taken by the WLB and the WMC, all designed to cripple and to hamstring free union activity. The next stage, so far successfully resisted by the government, is the substantial incorporation of labor leaders into the administrative bureaucracy.

When the docile leaders fail to quiet or subdue the workingclass as ultimately they must fail, the next stage for the bourgeoisie is Fascism. The powerful McCormick press, all through the war, has called upon the soldiers to seize the wealth of the country when they return, as open and direct an agitation for fascism as it is possible to imagine at this stage. The American bourgeoisie is obviously preparing on all fronts to disrupt, demoralize and as soon as is necessary, batter down the American workingclass.

The American Proletariat and the State

The key to the understanding of the class struggle in America is a correct estimate of the social and political development of the American proletariat. At such a time as this the backwardness denoted by the absence of independent political organizations must be seen in historical perspective, national and, above all, international.

The American bourgeoisie, undominated by feudal relations, showed the European bourgeoisie the road to the French revolution. The Civil War initiated the movement among the European working classes which led to the formation of the First International and culminated in the Paris Commune. The American proletariat led the European in the struggle for the eight-hour day and public education. After 1865 the expansion to the West eased the political pressure of the proletariat upon the American bourgeoisie, but nowhere in Europe was the American proletariat exceeded in the militancy of its industrial struggles. The absence of feudal tradition, the freedom from the fear of invasion, and the whole historical development have imbued the American proletariat with a remarkable boldness in the pursuit of its aims such as it sees them. In the 20th century this is as true as it was in the 19th. Europe has never seen industrial struggles like the sit-down strikes in 1936. Thus, in the economic field from 1865 to 1936, the record of the American proletariat is clear. It is absolutely impossible for this national characteristic not to be reproduced now that the limits of American expansionism face the proletariat with the necessity of political organization. It is from here that we must begin.

The Russian Revolution, the disillusionment with World War I, the rise of Fascism, have been powerful sources of political fertilization among a proletariat already historically gifted with such precious characteristics, although the full consequences of this will not be fully appreciated until the social crisis actually grips the United States. More obvious have been the social consequences of the great depression of 1929. The most striking subjective development is a prevailing skepticism of the future of existing society, most easily recognized in the widespread fear, if not conviction, of a tremendous and inevitable depression after the present war. The most concrete expression of the 1929 experience was the organization of the CIO, one of the greatest and most significant chapters in the history of labor anywhere

at any period.

In 1939 the National Resources Board reported to the President as follows on the "basic characteristics" of the American economy: "Moreover, as people become increasingly aware of the discrepancy between rich resources and poor results in living and as the ineffectiveness in the organization of resources becomes more clear, a sense of social frustration must develop and be reflected in justified social unrest and unavoidable friction. Individual frustration builds into social frustration. And social frustration is quite as likely to work itself out in socially destructive as in socially constructive ways...The opportunity for a higher standard of living is so great, the social frustration from the failure to obtain it is so real, that other means will undoubtedly be sought if a democratic solution is not worked out. The time for finding such a solution is not unlimited." Such was an exact representation of the complex social relations in the USA in 1939.

In the war has enormously sharpened the contradiction between the productive power and the capacity of the capitalist market, it has still more prepared the proletariat for the recognition of the contradiction between the needs of capital and the aspirations of the great masses of the people. By the millions, men have been torn from their homes and passed through the military machine. By the millions the more backward elements have been dragged from rural stagnation, women from their homes and the petty bourgeoisie from offices, and hurled into the discipline of large-scale capitalist production. The country has undergone a profound social upheaval, the greatest the proletariat has ever known. Never has there been such an uprooting in American life.

The working class at the same time, as is inevitable in modern war but more particularly in this one, has received an extensive education in the realities of politics on both national and international scale. The unique success of Willkie's "One World" was far more a political than a literary phenomenon.

This unprecedented dislocation of normal existence, so fruitful either in revolutionary or counter-revolutionary possibilities, has been done under the direct aegis of the government. Directly and indirectly the government has interfered in and controlled every aspect of economic and social life, from wages, working conditions, food and clothes, to the date of the conception of children and, in the army, even to the right to marry.

After World War I the resentment of the working class against all that it had to suffer was directed more against Morgan, Wall Street and private capital than the government. In World War II the hostility and the exasperation resulting from the stratification of the economy and the strain of the war, have been directed as much against the government as against private capital. The course of the miners' strike, undertaken against the full power of bourgeois society and its state during war time, shows how deep is the current dissatisfaction among the workers with the existing state of affairs and their consciousness of the center of responsibility.

The government has recognized this and in its efforts to counteract the deep anti-war feeling, the scepticism which was the aftermath of World War I and the sufferings of the people, has taken upon itself through its highest officials, the President and the Vice-President, to stimulate the masses by vague but constantly reiterated promises of repayment for the sacrifices of the war by the abolition of what the workers endured in the pre-war period.

The culminating feature of the whole experience, however, while it permeates the consciousness of the great masses of the people, is as yet being held in solution. But it will break forth with irresistible force as soon as the masses feel upon them the inevitable pressure of capitalist bankruptcy. It is this:

To the many-millioned mass already sceptical of "free enterprise", the war-effort of the state has demonstrated that a government by planned use of the American productive system can create a society of full employment and plenty for all.

At the present moment the proletariat is in a state of sullen suspiciousness directed toward the capitalist class in general and the Roosevelt Government in particular. Like the bourgeoisie, it confidently expects that the war at least in Europe is near enough to its conclusion to justify intensive preparations for the post-war period. The end of this phase of the war can be the signal for the outbreak of the sharpest class struggles. It may even be impossible for the bourgeoisie to suppress them before the actual end of hostilities in Europe. It is not impossible that a break with Roosevelt may come before the 1944 elections. Such events are quite unpredictable. The decisive question, however, is that, although contradictory currents move among the working class, yet, as a whole, it knows what it wants and in millions, in its advanced groups, is determined to have it. It is conscious of great changes ahead in society both at home and abroad. It knows that labor is destined to play a great part in these changes. Even the cautious Murray has stated that "labor must raise its heights to include more than matters of dues-paying membership or contracts, wages, hours and working conditions, to include the entire range of our political, economic, social and cultural life."

The millions of returning soldiers have one uncompromising demand, full employment; another demand, opportunities for education, show that they will not tolerate a return to the pre-war conditions. As clearly as if in the palm of the hand can be seen both the objective and subjective elements of a social crisis which once started will rapidly pose the most fundamental problems of society.

III. The petty bourgeoisie and the Negroes

The consciousness of social crisis and the dominating role of the state is not and could not be confined to the proletariat. The technicians and other professional classes, the mounting millions of the state bureaucracy, increasingly feel the merciless pressure of government taxation upon them. The medical profession is in turmoil over the certainty of government intervention. After a period of eclipse, the Technocrats, well-financed, are once more making a pseudo-revolutionary bid for the support of these groups, on the basis of scientific organization of society by government. Small business has been ruined by the war and has seen the power of the state shamelessly used for the benefit of the big industrialists. The small farmers, long accustomed to look to the state for subsidies and relief of all sorts, are today more than ever dependent upon it.

In Europe, during periods of great social unrest, these sections of society, usually begin by gravitating in large numbers towards an alliance with the labor movement. In the U.S. labor has not yet put itself forward as an agent for the reconstruction of society as a whole. Instead of being accepted as an alternative power for control of the state, organized labor

is regarded by the petty-bourgeoisie either as a sectional grouping which is justified in fighting for its strictly industrial rights, or as a source of unrest and violence which must be, at least, curbed in the interests of social peace. A skillful propaganda directed towards the farmers portrays the "extravagant" demands of labor unions as the cause of all rural difficulties. This view has made headway particularly in the South. The insistence on "free enterprise as the basis of our free institutions" which is the stock-in-trade of Willkie seeks to frighten the small capitalist with the spectre of "state socialism" and to terrorize the petty-bourgeois democrats with the idea of dictatorship. The attempt to do the same and at the same time to appeal to the labor vote is the basis of the ludicrous contradictions in which Wallace so often finds himself.

From their very ignorance of the role labor can play in the reconstruction of society, progressive petty bourgeois elements are driven to place more and more reliance on the Roosevelt Government and the New Deal Administration. In the absence of a labor program which they can understand the more reactionary or the more timid elements are ripe for fascism. The Townsend movement and the Ham and Eggs movement in California show how ready for radical social solution, under the aegis of government, are large sections of the near-proletarian population. The millions of rural and petty bourgeois elements who have been catapulted into industry are an unstable element which at the end of the war will be open to the powerful political impress either of organized labor or of fascist reaction.

The Negroes

The Negroes during the last four years have undergone an intensive political development. Their pariah status in American society made them that section of the U.S. population least susceptible to the bourgeois fraud of "war for democracy". From the start of the war effort they have combined actual repudiation or tactical acceptance of "war for democracy" with the most militant struggle for all their rights in every sphere of American life. The persecutions to which they have been subjected in the armed forces and the hypocrisy of the government in its pretended desire to integrate them into the industry, have unloosed a wave of hatred directed against the government, the police, the persecuting elements in the South and the hoodlums in the great cities who have resented the efforts of the Negro to achieve complete citizenship. Despite inevitable frictions and the racial incitement of Ku Klux Klan and fascistic elements the labor movement has on the whole shown a readiness to accept the Negro into its ranks. But the general social upheaval and exasperations of the war and the uncompromising and aggressive attitude of the younger Negroes have resulted in a series of racial outbreaks, which presage the fiercest struggles in the inevitable crisis of post-war bourgeois society. The Negroes themselves are as a whole overwhelmingly favorable to the labor movement in general, but the labor movement, here as elsewhere, lags behind in its consciousness that labor must lead the Negroes not only in lifting the trade union disabilities but also in breaking all the chains of social prejudice and discrimination which still bind them.

Disillusionment with the Roosevelt Government, particularly in its treatment of Negroes in the Army, has left the Negroes in a situation in which, for the present, the most militant elements turn to secret arming for self-defence and acts of explosive violence without well-defined aim. Among the Negroes more than in any other section of the community is the sentiment wide-

spread that things cannot continue as they have in the past and that the government is responsible. The twists and turns of the FEPC, the astounding proposal of Biddle to exclude Southern Negroes from the great Northern cities, shows the nervousness and impotence of the Roosevelt bureaucracy before this grave social problem. Whereas the real crisis of Negro relations with the rest of the community did not break out until after the end of World War I, the pitch of the present tensions can be judged from the fact that they have exploded all over the country well before the end of the war. A labor program for the reconstruction of society, in which redress of the legitimate grievances of the Negro people occupy a prominent and unquestioned place, can unloose that revolutionary current which is nearest the surface in the USA today. On the other hand, unemployment and the tensions and fears it will bring could easily result in fratricidal struggles and a weakening and demoralization among the great masses of the people, labor, Negroes and the petty bourgeoisie. Willkie is doing his best to turn the dissatisfaction of the Negroes to the advantage of the Republican Party and can do real damage here to their steady but slow process towards unity with the labor movement. The fascist elements have already shown themselves quite aware of the possibilities of disrupting labor which are offered to them by the extremely tense racial situation.

IV. The Labor Party

Both the objective and subjective situation in America therefore not only demand but are favorable for the emergence of labor as leader of American society in opposition to the bourgeoisie. Yet the outstanding fact is that the American proletariat lacks independent political organization at a time when political organization was never more needed. This is the political task, to help the proletariat express its aspirations in program and organization corresponding to its deepest needs and the perils and responsibilities of the age. It is here, however, that the whole past of America, the recent history of the American proletariat, the social and political consequences of the last four years in the United States and the explosive world situation must be taken into the fullest and most careful consideration.

The late development of mass labor organization has both stimulated and retarded the political development of the American working class. In foreign countries the rights of labor, social legislation, etc., were the obvious result of mass pressure organized by labor leaders. In the United States the Roosevelt government cleverly presented itself as the originator, initiator and organizer of these developments. Thus, whereas in Europe the winning of these advantages fortified the class consciousness learned in the industrial struggle, in the U.S. all these gains seemed to fortify the ascendancy of the political organization of the bourgeoisie over the working class. In reality this is only half the truth and the lesser half. Organized labor in America, insofar as it supports Roosevelt, does so in a manner far more class-conscious than otherwise. It considered the New Deal as essentially a New Deal for the working people. While this inhibited the emergence of an independent political organization of national scope, it has resulted in a widespread sentiment that unemployment and social suffering are no longer questions between the industrial worker and the private capitalist, but that the government is responsible and must take whatever measures are necessary to repair an intolerable state of affairs.

The freshness and formidable militancy of the American proletariat, untrammelled by the weight of national tradition and international complications,

gave it a power fully recognized by the bourgeoisie and particularly by the state. In 1933 the highly developed organizations and political experience of the French proletariat could force from the French bourgeoisie less than the purely industrial actions of the proletariat of America forced from the American bourgeoisie.

The outbreak of the war consolidated a growing consciousness among all ranks of the proletariat that production was a social process in which labor had both rights and responsibilities. In 1929 in the minds of the workers organized labor was a small section of the population, the capitalists another, and government a third, three different entities. The breakdown of the system of "free enterprise" in 1929 resulted in a tremendous growth in social and class consciousness. By 1939 "free enterprise" had disguised itself as "management" in order to emphasize its social role in production. Organized labor now looked upon itself as entitled to a voice in the management of the productive process and looked to government as the responsible mediator of conflicting claims. Already, however, by 1940, as was shown by the Keuther Plan, one of labor's most advanced sections, the UAW, opposed itself to management as a candidate for the organization of production in the interests of society as a whole. The last three years have seen a truly astonishing development of the social consciousness of organized labor. In the speeches of even such conservatives as Murray and Green organized labor now demands the fullest participation as of right in all the post war plans of the government. It uncompromisingly states that the chief business of the government is to plan the productive system so as to eliminate unemployment. The UAW has demanded government ownership and operation of all monopolies and strategic war industries.

Under the circumstances the slogan of an independent Labor Party acquires a connotation entirely different from that associated with it in 1939.

Whereas the Labor Party in 1939 could be considered merely as a means of concretizing and developing the growing class consciousness of the proletariat, today and henceforth its significance can only be that of a political organization of the working class which will organize the economy for purposes of peace as drastically as the capitalist government organized it for purposes of war.

The approach to this question must be made with full understanding of the fundamental social crisis which faces the post-war United States. The successes of Father Coughlin, the Christian Fronters and other Fascist organizations previous to the war should be a warning of what to expect when the economic and social contradictions, so immeasurably intensified by the war, begin to express themselves. Planning for full employment and social progress is the expressed aim of millions of organized workers, and the unexpressed but even more intense desire of the broad masses of the population. The middle classes will be seeking a way out of the intolerable situation in which the crisis places them. If they are not shown a clear and confident policy in one direction, they will inevitably seek it in the other. Yet the American working class does not as yet possess a revolutionary consciousness. Therefore any Labor Party which seeks the support of the masses of the people must of stern necessity present itself not as a party which will "represent" the interests of labor in Washington, but as one which is ready to take all the necessary steps to satisfy the desires of the great body of the people. Not to do this would not only be to doom itself to futility, if not failure. By the very inadequacy of any program of mere amelioration of existing conditions, or still worse, of no program at all, the road will be opened up for the demagoguery of Fascism.

As with the burning question of unemployment so with all others. The Labor Party must today be presented as the architect which will begin that economic reconstruction without which modern society is doomed to Fascism and the other barbarisms of unrestricted private profit. It is on this question that turns all serious political activity in the United States from now on. True to themselves the New Dealers, the trade union bureaucracy, and the Stalinists (for the time being) are already and will be the bitter enemies not only of any independent Labor Party but of such a Labor Party as this.

The Labor Party will therefore be presented as that organization of the workers which will form a Labor Government to carry out the Labor Party program.

1. The Labor Party must unhesitatingly take the position that if the welfare of the community were made the criterion of production, unemployment would disappear in the same way that it disappeared when production for the war was the main aim. The Labor Government will drastically reorganize the whole economy of the country with the aim of providing the best possible feeding, housing, clothing and cultural opportunities for the whole nation. This is the way to insure full employment. There is no other way.

The public works of the Labor Government will aim directly at the development of the community. Above all it must repudiate the conception that its program of public works would be for the purpose of "finding work for the unemployed", WPAs, increased relief, and all the shameful capitalist pencees which the workers were prepared to tolerate in 1939.

Such capital as is needed for the initiation of enterprises will be obtained by expropriating the sixty families, by abolition of large inheritances, and by merciless taxation of the capitalist class. Any capitalist concern which refuses to produce on the terms laid down by the government will be immediately confiscated and handed over to a joint committee of workers and the government to continue production. Also for the purposes of financing production, there will be a rigorous salary limitation of \$10,000 on all capitalists and management.

2. The Labor Government will carry out a complete technical reorganization of American farming in collaboration with the small farmers. At the same time its chief public works will be directed towards reconstruction of the rural communities (TVA, transport, sewage, housing, etc.) so as to put an end to the mischievous differences in the standard of living and cultural opportunities of the city and rural worker.

3. The Labor Government will institute a complete system of social insurance in which the welfare of the insured will be considered as a right to all the advantages of civilization from infancy to old age and not as a dole handed out in order to prevent revolution.

4. The Labor Government will initiate an extensive plan of popular education, both technical and liberal, which will begin the abolition of educational differences between different sections of the population. Positions of trust and influence in the community will then rest entirely upon merit. The voting age of the youth will be lowered to 18.

5. The Labor Government will not tolerate any palliatives or pandering

to the so-called ingrained prejudices of Southern elements and race-ridden hoodlums on the Negro question. It will forthwith abolish all legal and political discrimination from which the Negroes suffer in all the institutions of government and society. It will immediately, with the collaboration of the unions and professional associations, begin a process of complete integration of the Negroes into all branches of industry. It will thus, in a brief period, break the back of what has been a source of disruption, demoralization and international scandal to the American people for 300 years.

6. The Labor Government will recognize that the defence of the country is a prime responsibility of government. But it will not tolerate conscription or the large old-fashioned standing army which is now being advocated by militarists and reactionaries and which always has been and always will be an instrument of oppression against the people. It will organize and educate a popular militia of the whole able-bodied population, being confident first that the modern country is invincible in which the people themselves undertake the national defence, and secondly so high is the technical and industrial organization of the modern army that the best defence is that which is based on the closest familiarity between the workers in the process of production and the technical implements of war.

7. The Labor Government proposes to have its own foreign policy whereby it will assist the forces of democracy and colonial emancipation abroad in accordance with what it is certain are the wishes of the great majority of the American people. Without rushing into foreign adventures of any kind, it proposes to use its influence on behalf of those forces in the world at large which are attempting to create a new world as different as possible from the old. To this end it will begin by repudiating all the holdings of American capital abroad and hand them over to any non-fascist governments to be held in trust for the people. It is convinced that by an exchange of products on the basis of the needs of the great masses of the people in every country, unemployment, war, and fascism will be made impossible.

8. The Labor Government will not attempt to govern the country through hypocritical speeches in Congress and bureaucratic boards of industrial and social administration. The capitalists having failed, the Labor Government will appoint representatives of the working masses and professional organizations to form such administrative organizations as are necessary. The working people in factory, mine and field will through workers committees maintain a close watch not only on the production but also in its relation to the plans of the government. The professional classes will do the same. That is the only way in which government of the people, by the people, for the people, can in time become a reality. At the present stage of national and world economy any other mode of government is bound to increase the oppressive power of a million-headed bureaucracy which can be nothing but the instrument of a small ruling class.

Propaganda and agitation for a Labor Party to form such a Labor Government does not exclude the concrete support of any other kind of Independent Labor Party.

Two questions immediately arise.

The first is whether such a Labor Party forming such a Labor Government is possible. As a theoretical question, the query is sterile, not to say absurd. An effective independent political organization of the American workers will depend upon many factors, national and international, but chiefly upon

the developing consciousness of the American workers themselves. The CIO did not depend upon whether John L. Lewis wanted it or not. Its motive force was the past history of the American working class and the magnificent response it has always made to any objective situation. In the same way the American mass party of the proletariat will sweep with it the Greens and the Lewises and the Reuthers or create new leadership. The task is to take the lead in placing the idea adequately before them, to emphasize their responsibility and to assist in clarification and organization.

If, however, the question of the possibility of such a Labor Government is posed by the workers themselves, then the answer is of great importance. The answer is, first, that it can be formed by organized labor boldly asserting its determination to show the road of social reconstruction. Labor, however, while in words and action asserting its primary position, cannot reconstruct society alone. It must therefore represent itself to all the suffering groups in the community as their champion and their representative in the proposed reorganization. It must appeal to the farmers, the Negroes, to all those deserving of old-age pensions and the youth. To the technicians and professional classes it must appeal on the uncompromising basis that they choose between the leadership of the small group of monopolists and their satellites, or the leadership of organized labor. It is an imperative necessity in the United States today to point out to them that their salvation from pauperization, and their program for truly social services in health, education, etc. have no prospect of realization except through the power of organized labor, that they have nothing to lose and everything to gain from the raising of the economic and social status of the great masses of the people. The only other alternative is fascism and they can judge from Germany what is the fate of the middle classes which at this stage of social development refuse to follow the leadership of labor.

The second question is whether such a propaganda does not inculcate illusions about parliamentary processes. Presented abstractly, it does. Yet it must be understood that it is impossible to present a program to the working class and at the same time insist with equal emphasis that it cannot be realized. The social program must be adapted to the consciousness of the working class. The emphasis must be laid upon its own responsibility with a full understanding of the fact that it must make its own experiences. Yet the American working class has been taught sufficiently by the international events of the past 25 years to have some idea of the limitations of parliamentary procedure. Neither does its own national history give it any special predilection for parliamentary fetishism. The American working class and its allies will be able to understand the warning that democracy in the eyes of the capitalists is democracy which functions only for private profit. Using Italy, and Germany as example, the propagandists must tell the workers that as soon as the capitalists see that labor is making headway with its plans for beginning the necessary reconstruction of society and winning the support of the masses of the people, they will rapidly begin to finance and arm fascist bands. These can only be dealt with by organized labor which will organize its own defence guards and sweep these would-be storm-troopers and fascisti from the streets as soon as they appear there. The insistence on the inevitability of this development and the responsibility of labor to check it by direct action is sufficient guarantee against reformist illusions. The unwearied agitation not for any kind of Independent Labor Party but for such a Labor Party which will begin the reconstruction of society is the greatest strictly educational service that a revolutionary organization can render to the American proletariat and the millions of troubled and questioning people in America today.

December 6, 1943

---J. R. JOHNSON

595

THE LABOR PARTY

A Resolution, submitted by Paul Temple

The present upturn in political action talk and Labor Party sentiment in the trade union movement is showing increasingly that even substantial sections of the trade union bureaucracy, not to speak of the rank and file, are beginning to realize that the self-limitation of organized labor to economic action only ("Pure and simple" trade unionism) is self-defeating.

The point of the long-standing socialist insistence on the necessity of political action is being hammered home especially by the development of increasing political (governmental) intervention in the relations between capital and labor.

Socialists have always been the staunchest proponents of political action by labor. Insofar as objective circumstances themselves are forcing the labor movement to turn to political action, it becomes increasingly important for Socialists to be clear that political action -- including political action by labor -- can be good or bad, progressive or reactionary; an aid to the socialist development of the working class or an obstacle to it; conservative, reformist, liberal, fascist, or revolutionary.

The criterion of Socialists in their estimation of the character of political formations, or of the development of a given political party, is clear and definite. This is the criterion of class independence.

To pose the question: Shall labor form a Labor Party? is to ask: Would the formation of a Labor Party REALLY lead to a political break-away by labor from capitalist politics?

The question is not answered by deciding to add the word "independent" to "Labor Party". It is only obscured by confusing the formal organizational independence of a party with its political content.

The fact that the British Labor Party, for example, is an independent organization does not reflect on the fact that it does not represent independent working-class political action today. The independence of labor politics -- its class independence, not its organizational form -- is in the first place a programmatic question.

The Strategical Analysis of Revolutionary Socialists

Before the present era of capitalist decline, when capitalism was expanding, the formation of a reformist Labor Party with an INDEPENDENT class program was a possibility. It was accomplished in Britain; it was proposed by Marx and Engels for America.

It was a possibility because a reformist struggle for

immediate gains economic and political, which the bourgeoisie was able to grant if sufficiently pressed, offered a realistic political perspective. At the same time, and for the very same reason, the reformist parties of social-democracy also were able to play a progressive role in the historical development of the working class.

Today, in both cases, this political perspective is no longer actual. Today, even the successful struggle for immediate demands requires militant, class-struggle, implicitly revolutionary action. The bourgeoisie must tend to withdraw rather than grant further concessions. What gains are made episodically are cancelled out by the development of the capitalist crisis, the imposition of war economy, and tomorrow by post-war breakdown.

The time is past when a working-class political party acting within the programmatic limitations of bourgeois reformism had an independent role to play in organizing the class in independent action for immediate concessions. Today, the only working-class program which is actually -- politically -- independent of the capitalist class is the revolutionary program.

There is no reason for making any putative American Labor Party a peculiar exception to the rule: Today every political formation is confronted with the harsh alternatives -- defense of capitalism or the fight for socialism. Only individuals without responsibility, theorists, demagogues and impotent groups can continue to talk in terms of a dreamed-up middle ground. The possibility of finding footing in a middle ground is no longer there for any serious political movement. The pressure of social forces does not permit this escape from reality to any serious political organization which has to act, on real problems.

The old type of reformist program which, in a different period, provided this middle ground, has now been taken over by the most enlightened section of the bourgeoisie itself -- the "left" New Deal Democrats, the Rooseveltians, the "liberal" wing of capitalist politics. It is in this sense that we used to make the observation that the Roosevelt administration may be called the social-democratic phase of American political development. It is that social-democratic phase, not in its "classic" form naturally, but in the crabbed, reactionary, telescoped and already senile form inevitable under the new conditions of chronic capitalist decline and chronic war and revolution. The lusty reformism of the old days, with its progressive consequences and politically independent programmatic base, is no more possible for it than it is possible for the labor bureaucracy.

"Social-Patriotic...but Politically Independent of Capitalism":

This analysis is made starkly concrete by the imperialist war now raging. As long as the revolution does not appear as a pressing threat, the setting up of a labor party would mean for the reformist leaders setting up in politics against the leaders of capitalism whom they support and FROM WHOM THEY HAVE NO ESSEN-

TIALLY DIFFERENT PROGRAM.

To them, as to us, the war question is paramount. Less than ever are they willing to "break national unity" at this time when they are acting as whips to line the workers up behind the capitalist government's war policy, and specifically behind Roosevelt.

The United States is in the midst of the second imperialist world war. The criterion of class independence becomes translated into terms of the war. In the midst of an imperialist war, a social-patriotic party and a party independent of capitalist politics can never be the same thing.

We cannot give political support to a pro-war Labor Party, the only kind of Labor Party conceivable in the coming period. We cannot support pro-war candidates, whether running on the ticket of the Democrats, Republicans, or of the A.L.P. (the existing "independent labor party"). We cannot wish the creation of a reformist, social-patriotic political machine, born for the purpose of "independently" rallying the workers to the support of the demagogic wing of capitalist politics.

The Threat of "Labor" Third-Party-ism

This analysis determines the political perspective of the labor party movement in America which -- though it is today still on a much lower organizational level than it has been at least twice before in America since 1918 -- may yet burgeon into a more serious organizational development.

Such an eventuality could occur under the pressure of three inter-related forces:

(1) Generally speaking, a greatly intensified discontent by the rank and file of labor with the bourgeois politics of the labor movement -- a healthy impulse from the grass roots which would have to be "ridden" and channelized by the leadership if it could not merely be knocked down.

(2) The ending of the Roosevelt era and the triumph of the more openly reactionary wing of capitalist politics, with a consequent extrusion of the bourgeois left, homeless, into the political cold, and their rapprochement with the labor bureaucracy.

(3) The sweep of revolution in Europe, in its effect on class relations in America, together with the direct backwash of the war on the revolutionization of American labor.

Under the impact of such forces the formation of an independent, third party in America, representing the coalition of the labor bureaucracy and the bourgeois left, is a potent threat.

Whether such a party is entitled the American Labor Par-

ty or not, whether it is heralded forth at a trade union convention or in a Washington hotel or at the former following the latter, its political character will be unchanged. With its mass basis in the trade union workers -- the liberals will not escape this inevitable present-day accompaniment of any third party movement which wants to be of greater consequence than the Lemke party of 1936 -- it bodies forth the characteristic combination of the People's Front: the generals-without-an-army of bourgeois reformism bestriding and reining in the body of labor.

It does no good to say: We want a "genuine" independent labor party, not a Third Party. We ask, and there is no answer: What basic difference of today are these two labels supposed to refer to? In program? support of capitalism? methods? mass basis? The labels are nostalgic historical references to a dichotomy that has ceased to exist.

Two Labor Parties: the Reality of the A.L.P. --- the Dream of a "Revolutionary Labor Party"

The Marxist analysis of the labor party problem has been confirmed at all points by the only existing "independent labor party" in the country -- the American Labor Party of New York State.

This "independent labor party" took its inception in the fear of the labor bureaucracy that progressive labor in New York was turning away from Roosevelt and the New Deal in disillusionment. It was formed in order to ride this progressive impulse of discontent with bourgeois politics, and rein it toward support of Roosevelt.

Like any other today, this labor party was the continuation of class-collaborationist politics -- by other means.

This "independent labor party" has since acted completely as the "loyal" wing in New York of the Roosevelt Democracy. Its structure and organization is if anything more bureaucratized than are the trade union bodies on which it is formally based. Its farthest step in the direction of "independence" was the running of an "independent labor" candidate for the high post of Governor of the State of New York -- Dean Alfange! -- as a bold move for independent action -- by the Roosevelt wing of the Democratic Party.

If a Third Party of bourgeois reformism had been formed in New York "instead of" the A.L.P. -- how possibly could it have differed from the actually-existent A.L.P.? If a Third Party is formed nationally, how possibly will it differ from a national extension of the A.L.P.?

To call for the creation of a national American Labor Party means to take responsibility for it before the working class -- at least, before that section of the working class which heeds our call: namely, the most advanced, militant, class-conscious workers. Criticism of ("refusal to take responsibility for") this,

that or every other specific action by the Labor Party does not absolve us of our responsibility for the effect of its existence on the class struggle for socialism.

The desire to find a by-pass to the creation of a mass revolutionary party is a common concession to the mood of the times. It even leads to the notion that a national American Labor Party can be that mass revolutionary party itself! This theory of how a revolutionary party can be forged is by far less plausible than the average theory on this basic question which Bolshevism has had to reject and combat. We teach that a revolutionary socialist party must be founded on a revolutionary program and built around that program. A wealth of historical experience, including that of the Norwegian Labor Party, has confirmed this in every instance. We have seen no reason advanced to make an exception for America in this regard.

To teach the most advanced workers to look toward a Labor Party as the political rallying center of American labor (let alone as the future revolutionary party instrument of American labor!) is to teach a falsehood and a delusion. It will be precisely the best, most advanced workers who will be disillusioned with a Labor Party first. Our job is to hasten this process, if it turns out that they must go through it. It is not our job now to point to the Labor Party as the way out of the post-war breakdown which we predict, or as the shield against fascism, but to insist with all our strength that only revolutionary socialist politics and a revolutionary party can solve these problems. We must tell the truth about the Labor Party, that it will not be able to solve "even the most immediately pressing problems" of labor.

The Policy of Revolutionary Socialists

We therefore do not advocate the formation of a Labor Party. Still less do we advance the defeatist concept that if a Labor Party is not formed, the alternative for the workers is defeat and doom.

Our attitude toward existing or future labor parties or labor party movements is a question of tactics. We have always said and say again that we will stand at the side of the working class without separating ourselves from them, in every phase of their political development.

We stand ready to enter and work within any labor party that is set up, in a struggle for real independent action and program. We will advance and fight for the immediate and transitional demands which we propose for the working class. We will seek to utilize whatever arena the labor party provides for these purposes and for socialist education. To any labor party movement we say: "Your leaders have ostensibly organized for independent political action and in order to solve your pressing problems. It is our opinion that they and the labor party will do neither. You don't agree with us? Then see for yourselves; fight for class-struggle candidates and a class-struggle program. We in-

tend to fight along with you for these objectives. We will show you in action that socialist politics is the only way out." This is the general sense of a revolutionist's agitation and propaganda with respect to a labor party movement.

But our job is to attempt to shorten by our own efforts any hypothetical labor-party phase of working-class political development; to convince at least the vanguard now that they must come directly to the revolutionary party, and to utilize their experiences, especially their experiences with the labor party, now for this purpose. Our job is to foster disillusionment with the reformist, pro-war, collaborationist machine, instead of strengthening illusions by our own advocacy. We do not wish the character of the labor party to be exposed solely by experience. We wish the advanced workers to turn to the others and say: "This party told us the truth about the labor party; it showed us the way soonest; it is a good party."

It is primarily by our work in the trade union movement that the best elements of our class will be drawn to us and the revolutionary party built. The prospect ahead is one of world-wide revolution and crises. In modern days these have always developed through a rising tempo of strike action, political strike movements included; the break-up of reformist formations; the merging of economic action into political action through the variety of organizational forms which the working class inexhaustibly invents, of which the soviets were the type -- shop committees, councils of action, etc.

This is how the revolutionary politicalization of the working class expresses itself. This is real independent political action by a working-class mass movement. This is the end to which we shape our policy.

###