

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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WORKERS PARTY
114 W. 14 St.
New York City

January 7, 1946

TO ALL BRANCHES:

Dear Comrades:

Although this will get to you after Christmas the suggestions we have to make retain their general validity. We had originally thought, too late it is true, that it would be an excellent thing if all Party members instead of exchanging Christmas presents contributed that money to the European relief work which the Party is doing. I understand that Comrade Bell has sent out a circular on this matter. What we want to urge on the party is that we begin the practice of making special personal sacrifice in the days to come that more supplies may be made available to our starving and naked comrades and brothers and sisters of Europe.

I emphasize the matter of personal sacrifice because that is what it ought to be. We can do this because our standard of living is incomparably above the pitiful and wretched existence of our unfortunate friends in Europe.

This is not a suggestion for financial action in the branches but for action by the individual party members as individuals. I do not think it is necessary to say any more.

Fraternally yours,

DC/CW

David Coolidge,
Organizational Sec'y

SITUATION IN CHINA

The following position which was taken by the Political Committee several weeks ago should have gone out to the Party before now but was overlooked.

The Committee discussed the situation in China and takes the following general position. As is usual with political affairs in China the present situation is somewhat complicated. This, of course, is particularly the situation where the Stalinists are active on the political scene.

The base of the revolt among the Chinese masses is in the peasantry. As far as can be learned there is no activity in the present situation on the part of the relatively small Chinese proletariat. The chief concern of the peasant masses is for the land. This demand is directed at the government and the landlords.

The leadership of the peasantry including the military leadership is directly in the hands of the native Chinese Stalinists.

These seem to be the bare facts in the situation. The question arise, what should be the position of the Workers Party, in so far as it is necessary that we have a position on such a situation. That is, on a situation in which we cannot intervene directly, one so far removed and a situation difficult to acquire detailed information about.

While it is necessary to differentiate between the aspirations of the peasant masses and the political maneuvers of the Stalinist leadership, it is at the same time imperative that we remain clear and adopt a correct policy. We express full sympathy to the Chinese peasant masses in their aspirations to escape the merciless exploitation of the native Chinese bourgeoisie; landlords and others. We cannot give political support, critical or otherwise, to this movement as it is totally dominated by the Stalinists and used for their own political ambitions.

It is necessary to underscore the fact that the Chinese peasants are isolated from and do not have the assistance of the Chinese proletariat. It is not only certain theoretical considerations but also the lesson of history that non-proletarian elements among the toilers cannot be the spearhead for the emancipation of the masses from exploitation and oppression. This role must be played by the advanced section of the toilers which is the proletariat.

The hypothetical question of what would be our role if we were in China can be answered in the light of the above considerations. Our task would be to explain these things to the peasant masses if we were in their midst. This would include the role of the Stalinists, the role of the Chinese compradore bourgeoisie, and the role of United States and British imperialism. British and American imperialism is the main point that must be stressed in any consideration of Chinese affairs. Also it would be necessary to attempt activation of the Chinese proletariat to the end that they assume the leadership of the struggle, not only the

struggle already initiated by the peasant masses but the overall struggle against imperialism, including Stalinist imperialism, that is, the struggle for national liberation. Inherent in this struggle, of course, is the struggle of the Chinese masses: proletariat and peasantry against the national bourgeoisie.

It is necessary to emphasize therefore, that we do not support, in the political sense, the present struggle of the Chinese peasantry. We understand the correct desire for the land and to escape the exploitation of the landlords, we sympathize with their struggle and their aspirations but for the reasons given above we do not give even political support to the movement.

BRANCH MINUTES

It is necessary to call the attention of the branch executive committees to the fact that we are not receiving minutes from the branches weekly. Branch secretaries should send branch minutes to the National Office each week. This applies to all branches, New York included. (New York branches should send their minutes through the New York City Office.)

NEW MEMBERS

Branches have been informed that they are to send the names and addresses of new members, with any pertinent information about the new member, to the Organizational Secretary. Upon receiving such names we will communicate with the new member, welcoming him or her into the Party and giving information about the Party. Please do not fail to send the names and addresses of new members to the Organizational Secretary.

UAW STRIKE FUND

You will notice in a forthcoming issue of Labor Action an appeal to Labor Action readers to send contributions to the UAW for its strike fund. This appeal is directed primarily to non-party people. It is not an appeal directed to the Party. All money paid into the Party should continue to go through the usual Party channels.

The strike buttons being sold in connection with the UAW strike should be procured by Party members through union connections for distribution and propaganda use in the shops where the comrades are working.

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December 8, 1945
Louisville, Ky.

Members of the Political Committee,

The members of the Louisville branch have followed the unity proceedings with great interest and give full support to the initiative shown by our party. Unity is first on the agenda toward increasing the effectiveness of the revolutionary movement, and the attitude of the SWP plenum toward this action is to be regretted.

We question the necessity of our party's demanding a separate internal bulletin as a condition for unity, and offer the following reasons against it,

1. It is a bar to unity. Reservations made by either party unveils mistrust of the other and throws question on the possibility of a healthy unity.
2. In our own party, with majority and minority, we function to the satisfaction of everyone with a single internal bulletin.
3. With both parties so small and so close to complete political and programmatic agreement, it is more important that the rank and file of the parties be united than separated by issues more pertaining to the leadership.

We feel that in the coming period of activity the movement stands to gain immeasurably from unity; and that if unity does not come about, in that event a proposal without the subject stipulation would be political capital for our party.

Louisville Branch

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December 20, 1945

LOUISVILLE BRANCH,

Dear Comrades:

The PC has considered your communication of Dec. 8 on the Unity Question. I have been directed to reply as follows:

1. We take it that you have received all the bulletins on the unity negotiations and that they have been read by each member of the Branch. These bulletins contain all of the material and all of the relevant facts in connection with these negotiations. I call your attention specifically to the bulletin containing the letter from Comrade Morrow on the

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withdrawal of our demand for an internal bulletin and our reply to that letter.

2. On the question of the demand for the internal organ the PC reaffirms its former position: a. Its position on the reasons for the original demand made at the first meeting of the negotiators from the two parties. All of these reasons are set forth in the documents which are in your hands. b. We adhere to the proposals set forth in the letter in reply to the Morrow letter on the internal organ. The committee stand committed to the position taken in that letter and is ready to reopen negotiations when and if the SWP signifies that it accepts the conditions presented in that letter.

We do not believe that we can do anything more and maintain the dignity and integrity of our Party. We have the responsibility, as a Party leadership, to protect the Party and to maintain its morale and its functioning.

3. On point (1) in your letter. It is the opinion of the Committee that our demand for an internal organ, under our own control, was not and is not today a "bar to unity". This is certainly out by the attitude of the SWP toward the whole question of unity as set forth in the documents which are in your possession. We say this, keeping in mind always the concrete circumstances in connection with the specific unity negotiations under review. This means that we are not dealing with the question of unity in general but with the real unity negotiations which took place between us and the SWP and their reactions to our proposals. If you will read the documents carefully you will note that the SWP did not really base its rejection of the proposals made by us, primarily around the demand for an internal organ. They stated specifically that they were concerned with the question as to whether or not such a merger "would work". They took the position, at their plenum, that the political differences must "be probed." They were also concerned with our organizational concepts.

4. On your point (2). The situation in our Party is not comparable to that in the SWP. It is true that we function, majority and minority, with a single internal bulletin. But there is an important reason why the SWP minority can function in this manner. The minority in our Party has from the very beginning right up to the present moment had its full democratic rights. So far as I know this has never been denied by the minority or even called into question.

This situation in the WP is not a matter of tolerance of contrary opinion. It is rather one of the cardinal foundation stones of our Party; that a minority must not be considered second class citizens, that a political minority has full rights and that it is the duty and responsibility of the majority to protect and defend those rights.

This flows from our conception that divergent political tendencies can and must exist together in the same Party, should such divergent tendencies arise.

We are speaking of course about tendencies which stand on the fundamental program of Marxism, as for example the minority in the WP or the SWP and the WP as political organizations.

This is not the case with the SWP. This is a bureaucratized party, lacking in practice the fundamental democratic principles and procedures enumerated above. Our own experience in the SWP affirms this. The experience of the present minority in the SWP is an affirmation of the characterization which we give the SWP.

The present minority in the WP has had no such experience as this. As a distinct political tendency in the Party they have not been denied a single democratic right. Such a course has never been seriously proposed. On the contrary it has been the conscious attitude on the part of the leading comrades of the majority that their democratic rights must and will be protected and defended. It is for this reason mainly that in the WP "we function to the satisfaction of everyone with a single internal bulletin." We are a different kind of party from the SWP with a different kind of regime and leadership.

5. On point (3) in your communication. The SWP and the WP are not "so close to complete political and programmatic agreement." (It is necessary to interpolate right here however that it was and is our contention that this difference in political and programmatic outlook, need not be and should not be a bar to unification. We hold that the two tendencies can exist together in the same party provided there is adequate freedom of discussion and the protection of the rights of minorities such as exists in the W.P.)

There are important and significant political differences between the two parties. These differences have existed from the days of the struggle which resulted in our separation down to the present. We have never glossed over these political differences. We did not during the negotiations for unity and we do not now. To deny that such differences exist, to attempt any opportunistic reconciling of the differences would be impermissible and could only retard political clarification and lead to political sterility.

It is at the point of the political differences that our Party has made outstanding and significant contributions to Marxian political thinking. One must not forget that it is possible to make contributions to Marxist thought. The total structure of Marxian contribution to social development is not completely fabricated and of course cannot be except to sectarians and theoretical dullards. In the WP with its internal democracy and absence of bureaucratism, we have been able to avoid the political doldrums. With our insistence on the testing of our theories and politics in the class struggle as it actually is, we have been able to avoid sectarianism. Due to the fact that we have given due and adequate attention to the development of political strategy and tactics suitable to the time, place and circumstance of our activities, we have escaped the opportunism which more and more is the fate of the SWP.

It was our distinctive political line and our unswerving adherence to the relevant political considerations established by the greatest leaders of the revolutionary movement, which were the bulwark of our Party during the war and which carried the organization through that crisis with full revolutionary integrity.

It was the Party political line and our understanding of the concrete

political level of the working class that makes of Labor Action the outstanding Marxian political paper it is today and not a Militant.

On the question of unity with the SWP we stand where we stood before. We have not changed our position as set forth in the documents already in the hands of the Party.

However we must not and will not mark time while Cannon and his associates "probe" the depths of the "political differences" between the two parties. We will not crawl into a fusion with the SWP. We are not political and organizational bankrupts looking for a port to get out of the storm.

There is another place in point (3) in your letter which requires comment. You say;... it is more important that the rank and file of the parties be united than separated by issues more pertaining to the leadership." In the first place it is difficult to envisage uniting two parties without the active participation of the leadership of the two organizations. Also you seem to assume that the main hindrance to unity is the attitude of the leadership of the two parties. Also that the issues involved were and are issues which revolve around the fortunes of the leadership only. This is certainly not in any sense true of the WP. Only to state a fact it is necessary to say that the unity proposal of the WP came to the Party from the leadership. It did not arise in the Party ranks. It did not arise in the ranks of the SWP but was first projected by the SWP minority.

It is correct to say that the SWP leadership has acted in a manner as though the issues were "more pertaining to the leadership". But their actions are not to be attributed to psychological motivations but to political and organizational notions. The SWP leadership does not desire to contest the validity of its political and organizational line with the better trained forces of the Workers Party. It is a fact that not only is the leadership of the WP politically superior to the leadership of the SWP but the political level of the ranks and file of our Party is higher than that of the rank and file of the SWP.

There is one final word that must be said in connection with point (3) in your communication. Our Party has been substantially united in its attitude toward the question of unity with the SWP and has been united in its approval of the manner in which the negotiations were conducted by the Party's negotiating committee. There has been no division between the "leadership" and the "rank and file" on this question. There have been no rank and file "issues" and no "issues nor o pertaining to the leadership".

The political Committee of the Party devised our strategy in this matter and presented proposals to the last plenum where the proposals were adopted. As rapidly as it could be done the whole Party was informed of what was transpiring.

The unity proposals which we made and the manner of conducting the negotiations were "above board" and out in the open, so to speak. What we did was not a "maneuver". We were not attempting to "educate the Party" on the value of unity. It is true that our negotiations and the

discussions around the unity proceedings had a definite educational value but we were not engaged in the fabrication of a "maneuver" in order to educate the Party on the good points of merging the two Trotskyists organizations. We meant exactly what we said and wrote. We were prepared to go through with what we said and wrote. This should be clear from a serious examination of the documents now in the hands of the Party.

6. Our Party today has a tremendous task before it. Right now we are out of the factory and out of the unions. Those who were in the factories before the lay-offs MUST reenter. Those who were not in, unless given other assignments by the proper Party authority, MUST get into the factory and into the unions. Our Party is too small and we must recruit and hold our new members.

The Party faces grave financial difficulties which we must relieve.

We have the problem of reestablishing our returning veterans in the Party, in the factories and in the unions.

We must strengthen our branches by providing them with organizers and greater forces.

We are preparing for a plenum on January 19-20. This plenum will prepare for the Party convention. The date will be set and preparations made for the pre-convention discussion.

All of this means that the WP has work to do.

Fraternally yours,

David Coolidge,
Organizational Secretary