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# What the Communist International Thinks of the Different Groups in the Party

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In order to get at the difference between the CEC majority and the present CEC minority groups one must look into the why and wherefore of the attitudes adopted not only towards the united front farmer-labor tactics, but also towards other political and industrial problems confronting the party.

## Our Party — Three Tendencies.

When one proceeds with such an examination of the outstanding features of these groups he finds the following characteristics predominant.

1. The group led by Comrade Foster and dominated by Comrade Cannon is superficial, empiric, non-Marxian, and in general does not look far enough ahead in its evaluation of social forces and political movements.

2. The Ruthenberg group consists of the more conscious elements, the elements constituting the traditional and genuine Left Wing of our party from the very day of its inception in the great split of the Socialist Party. This group is the more Marxian and has a much broader and deeper political outlook.

3. On the extreme Right of our party stands the Lore group, the Left Social Democratic group. The Foster group is politically the central group between the Left elements of our party found in the Ruthenberg group and the extreme Right elements following the leadership of Lore. In fact, the Foster group is a sort of a bridge between Two-and-a-Half Internationalism in our party and the oldest and most conscious Communists in our party following the leadership of Ruthenberg. Indeed, the Foster and Lore groups shade and merge into each other. In New York, for instance, all the Lore followers are an organic section of the Foster

group.

## What the CI Says.

If we examine the various declarations of the Comintern on the different groups in our party, we will find that it is precisely the above estimate which was made by the Communist International. Furthermore, an analysis of the attitude displayed by the various groups in different situations before the party shows that the Communist International was absolutely correct in its characterization of the different tendencies in the Workers (Communist) Party.

Comrade Radek in reporting to the American Commission in the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on May 20, 1924, declared: "With the exception of the group (Lore-Olgin group) which sees absolutely no political crisis in America and does not recognize the importance of the agrarian question, with the exception of this group, the two tendencies in the party which have grouped around Comrade Foster and Comrades Pepper-Ruthenberg, have begun with the conception that America is now passing through a very serious political and social crisis.

## A Correct Estimate.

Continuing his analysis of the groupings in the American party, Comrade Radek declared: "**As far as the work of Comrade Foster is concerned, I believe that we may have very serious difficulties with this comrade. I have read Comrade Foster's pamphlet in which he sides with Legien in the dispute between Kautsky and Legien. I believe that this group**

**does not look far enough.”**

Likewise, in the review of [Foster’s] *The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*, by Comrade Leder in the *International Press Correspondence*, vol. 3, no. 21, February 27, 1923, we find the following: “On the other hand, it appears to me that Foster does not perceive the obliquity of his politico-historical outlook.... To sum up, I repeat the opinion already given, that Foster’s historical outlook is much too one-sided.” It is for this reason that Comrade Leder, in reviewing this writing of Comrade Foster, declared that “Foster’s thesis and his substantiation are both erroneous.”

In the same discussion of the tendencies in the American party, Comrade Radek spoke of those who “have not understood enough of the revolutionary propaganda of Comrade Pepper.” Radek went on to say in his characterization of the two groups that: **“The group of Comrades Ruthenberg and Pepper appears to be more radical because Comrade Pepper, in his articles, has opened up very radical and very revolutionary perspectives for America.” When insisting that there be no breach in the American party, Comrade Radek spoke of the Ruthenberg group as “the element of Communist consciousness.”**

The following concrete examples show that the Communist International has sized up properly the groupings in the American party.

### **Our Unemployment Campaign — Please Wait!**

1. In the full CEC meeting of Feb. 16, 1924, comrade pepper proposed a plan to prepare the party to take full advantage of the unemployment situation which in the eyes of everyone equipped with a knowledge of Marxian economics was developing towards a mass scale. It was not until the March 18 CEC sessions and it was not until after the Foster majority had deferred action on Pepper’s resolution, that Comrade Browder proposed a propaganda thesis on unemployment in which he declared: “We are certain that unemployment on a mass scale will face the working class in the near future. That does not mean that we can say positively that it will be in the summer of 1924 or the winter of 1924/5 or even that it may not hold off until the summer of 1925.”

Judging by the lack of response on the part of the CEC majority members to the unemployment campaign proposals made by the minority members, one would say that it was Browder’s economics and not Marxian economics which was the basis of our failure to achieve results in the unemployment campaign today. In March [1924] the Foster majority could not see the economic slump which assumed an acute character as early as May.

### **Executive Committee Brings “Prosperity.”**

2. After the Coolidge election the official prosperity drummers of the American capitalist class became rather noisy. They saw in every ripple on the economic surface a torrent of prosperity. The Foster group practically accepted this vulgar bourgeois, unscientific estimate of the political situation when it informed the Comintern as follows: “Our unemployment campaign yet propaganda stage. Awaiting opportune moment for organization. Coolidge election started high boom stock exchange. General tenor capitalist press business future highly optimistic. Announcing projects large orders railway equipment. Number unemployed decreasing.”

The inference of this economic “analysis” is clear. The intention is even clearer.

3. In the attitude towards industrial work by the party we find further substantiation of the Comintern’s correct estimate of the two groups. With the Foster group industrial activity and mobilization for the same were an end in itself. Of course, since Marx declared that all class struggles are political struggles, the Foster group, in effect, maintains the attitude that industrial activity per se is political activity.

With the Marxian group, the minority of the CEC, industrial activities, our work in the trade unions, are only a means to an end, are only a most effective means for the political radicalization of the masses. We propose to utilize the economic struggles of the workers against the exploiters and to develop a revolt of the working masses against the reactionary trade union bureaucracy primarily because these channels afford us an excellent opportunity of hastening the establishment of the leadership of the Communist Party over these masses. As Communists, it is our pur-

pose to unify the struggles of the workers, to lend a conscious character to these struggles, and to give a political edge to them.

### **Profintern Instructions Dead Letter.**

The industrial program prepared for us with the aid of the Profintern last May has been a dead letter. In that program our party Industrial Department was specifically told that “all the struggles of the workers shall be turned into political channels” and that our industrial policy must broaden itself beyond the narrow confines of trade union convention policy. We were told that our Industrial Department must not only have convention policies against the bureaucracy but must also have strike policies, policies for the everyday struggles against the exploiters with a view of giving the struggles a political edge.

The program of the Profintern is an excellent one. But since its arrival in June it has been a dead letter.

### **The Miners’ Convention.**

The difference between the two groups was evidenced in the CEC debates on the policy for the last national convention of the United Mine Workers. To Comrade Foster the battle to reinstate [Alexander] Howatt and to democratize the trade union machinery was the central, the dominant struggle. To comrade Pepper these were very important issues. But the political demands were to be stressed. Fight for Howatt! Of course! Fight for the democratization of the trade union machinery in order to facilitate the undermining of the bureaucracy! Most assuredly! But stress and make a major issue out of nationalization of the mines; out of the demand for government maintenance of the disemployed miners at full union wages; out of the farmer-labor united front campaign.

### **The Chicago Garment Strike.**

And in his report to the Executive Committee on the Chicago garment strike, Comrade [Jack] Johnstone declared on April 2, 1924, that *The Daily Worker*,

by raising the issue “On to City Hall” gave the workers the impression that the WP was using the strike for its own advancement, and that *The Daily Worker* overemphasized the criticism of Oscar Nelson, a notorious labor-faker alderman. Here we have a glaring example of the misunderstanding of the role of the Communist Party in the everyday struggles of the workers.

### **The FLP.**

This is an organic feature of opportunism in our ranks. Another phase of this opportunistic, narrow basis of the Foster-Cannon group is its theory of the party bowing before the spontaneity of the masses. “There is no conscious mass demand for a class farmer-labor party. Therefore, the Communists CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT agitate for such a party and MUST NOT utilize that slogan.” This is the burden of the song that the Foster group is singing in the present party controversy.

### **Dawes Plan and the Masses.**

In the ranks of the American workers there is at this moment no burning hatred of or conscious mass opposition to the Dawes Plan. Therefore, in the eyes of the Foster group it is folly for the Central Executive Committee to attempt to work out a program of action based on the CI policy on the Dawes scheme which will serve to arouse such hatred through enthusing these masses in the United States with some Communist consciousness.

### **An Opportunist Ideology.**

Comrade Stalin has very well characterized this attitude towards the spontaneity of the masses as follows: “**The theory of spontaneity is a theory of opportunism, the theory of bowing before the spontaneity of the workers’ movement is the theory of actual denial of the leading role of the vanguard of the working class.... The theory of spontaneity is the ideology of trade unionism.**” (*Lenin and Leninism*, pg. 43.)†

†- This is a very early example of quoting “chapter and verse” from Stalin’s *Foundations of Leninism*, which was not published under separate covers in the United States until 1925, when it was released as *The Theory and Practice of Leninism*.

### The Bridge to 2.5 Communism.

It is this lack of historical perspective coupled with this un-Communist attitude towards the role of the Communist Party as the vanguard, as the driving force and the spontaneity of the masses in the development of the revolutionary movement and the class struggle that serves as the connecting link between the Foster group and the Lore group. It would be insufficient and, therefore, incorrect to state that the Foster and Lore groups have been in an alliance merely for organizational reasons best known to themselves. There is intense sympathy between the ideology of the Foster and Lore groups.

Only on this basis can we understand the why and the wherefore of the Foster majority and comrade Lore having voted for each other's proposals at least 59 times. Only on this basis can we understand the fact that the Marxian group in the CEC did not vote for a single proposal made by or in behalf of the Lore tendency. More than that. Whenever we attempted to correct Comrade Lore's deviations from the policies of the Comintern we were called persecutors. It is especially significant to note that while we were being called persecutors because we insisted on the CEC complying with the CI decision regarding the Two-and-a-Half International tendency in the party, members of our group were being removed from responsible party positions and Loreites put in their places.

### Radek on Lore.

In the light of this situation the opinion of the Lore tendency entertained by the Communist International takes on a particular instructive and timely value in the present party controversy. It is in this opinion of the Communist International that we find the basis for the organic unity between the Foster and Lore groups.

Thus Comrade Radek spoke of the Lore group in our party in his report before the American commission in the Presidium of the EC of the CI on May 20, 1924:

In conclusion something about the Lore group. I believe that we are not dealing here with personal lapses of

Comrade Lore. He has written articles in which he presents the history of the Communist International completely in the spirit of the Second-and-a-Half International. He represents us as a movement which at first was anti-parliamentarian, for splits in the unions, and then crept out to a realistic standpoint.† Or in an article on the English Labour Party, Lore says: "Poor MacDonald would like to do everything good for the working class, but the liberals won't let him." In an article on the revolution he says, "Conditions in Germany have long been overripe for the revolution. But the Communist Party, for which there are international difficulties has succeeded in keeping the workers from the revolution."

### CEC Instructed to Fight Lore.

I believe that behind these matters there is one fact in regard to Comrade Lore. During the war there were in America German workers, former Social Democrats who for patriotic reasons were against America's participation in the war. Part of the German comrades in America came to us not as Communists, but as a result of the struggle which they conducted as Germans against America's entry into the war. And perhaps I am mistaken but I have the impression that Lore represents this section. [And] he has the support of the Finnish Federation, an organization with a fortune of \$15 million, made up of excellent skilled workers having more reformism in them than others. For that reason, I believe that the CEC acted incorrectly when it regarded the lapses of Lore as lapses of a particular fellow. **This is a centrist tendency in the party against which the CEC must fight.**

### Lore — Social Democratic.

The comrades must oppose Lore in the press, they must attack him. The comrades must not be misled by the fact that in the question of the support of the third party he has gone along with us. He did so from a traditional social democratic point of view — because of compromises with petty bourgeois parties. We are on no account against such compromises. In a revolutionary situation when the petty bourgeoisie is compelled to adopt revolutionary policies, we are prepared to make compromises. In the elections we were for compromises in Russia with the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries. **But in Lore we have a social democratic point of view meeting with a Communistic point of view and it would be very wrong if the decision of the Executive Committee of the Comintern should be interpreted as if the Executive Committee puts the banner of the Executive Committee into the hands of Lore and would say he represents the point of view of the executive. This is merely a coincidence.**

### Zinoviev Tells Truth About Lore.

And Comrade Zinoviev was even more emphatic in his evaluation of the Lore tendency as a menace to

†- Which would seem to be entirely accurate. Here we have an example of truth telling portrayed as "deviation."



the development of our party to a mass Communist Party. We quote from Zinoviev's speech in the same session:

**As regards Lore; from what I have read, he proves that he is in no case a Communist. I really do not know whether he belongs in the CEC.** In the resolution we have said that very politely. Perhaps we will be compelled to tell it to him less politely. The fact that Lore, too, was against the support of LaFollette is of no moment. We know the manners of the Social Democrats who hide behind some barricades, who say they are against the work among the farmers because they are orthodox Marxists. The American party will find ways and means of stating openly what is the matter with Lore.

### **Foster-Lore Alliance Serious Menace to Party.**

The danger to the party in the Foster-Lore alliance is inestimable. If the Foster group had a mistaken Communist political point of view of its own, the matter would be serious enough for our party. But, in fact, the Foster group today lacks a political point of view. In its alliance with the Lore group, the Foster group, in which there are found a number of comrades who can be of great service to the party, **is thus given a political point of view which is distinctly Social Democratic, which is decidedly non-Communist**, as the Communist International has shown.

The menace to the party in the Foster-Lore alliance lies in the fact that a group of comrades who are only beginning to develop a political point of view are being imbued with the spirit of the rankest opportunism, which is the basis of Two-and-a-Half Internationalism. In order to avoid just such a calamity for our party, the CI instructed the Foster group to work together with the Ruthenberg group against the Lore tendency.

### **Foster-Lore Alliance Violates CI Instructions.**

But what has Comrade Foster done to carry out the CI instructions regarding Lore? I quote from a document officially signed by Comrade Fahle Burman, Executive Secretary of the Finnish Federation, and secretly transmitted to Finnish Branch secretaries from Chicago on December 4, 1924. This document is a series of instructions to the Finnish branches to send a full quota to each CCC [City Central Committee] meeting with the purpose of electing delegates and participating in the discussion with full strength. This closely mimeographed 6 page document, though bearing the official imprint of the Federation Executive Secretary, Burman, was never officially transmitted to the Executive Secretary of the Party [Ruthenberg], who by the way is viciously maligned in the document. The best evidence of the Foster-Lore alliance against the Marxian group is given in the following quotation:

“THE CEC MAJORITY IS COMPOSED OF COMRADES FOSTER, CANNON, ABERN, AND THE UNDERSIGNED. COMRADE LORE HAS BEEN OF SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT OPINION BUT HAS NEARLY WITHOUT EXCEPTION VOTED WITH THE MAJORITY.”

And to cap the climax of this anti-Communist alliance comes the 11th hour endorsement of the majority thesis by Comrade Lore, after several weeks of “watchful waiting” to see whether the full force of Two-and-a-Half Internationalism would be necessary to help the Foster group in its fight against the Marxian group in the party.

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