

The Perspectives for a Labor-Farmer Party in the U. S.

By William Z. Foster

In the December 1954 and January 1955 numbers of Political Affairs, Albert E. Blumberg has presented an exhaustive analysis of the 1954 national elections, together with a rounded-out statement of political tasks leading up to the presidential elections of 1956, on the basis of the Program of the Communist Party. The present article deals with but one aspect of the Party program, namely the perspective of an eventual labor-farmer party and the relationship that this bears to the present-day main political task of educating, organizing and activizing the masses of workers now following the lead of the bourgeois political organizations, especially the Democratic Party.

THE UNITED STATES is the only major industrial country in the world where the working class does not possess its own broad mass political party—Labor, Socialist, or Communist. American history is, of course, replete with efforts by the workers and their farmer political allies to build such a party, but up to this time success has not been achieved. The present Progressive Party plays only a very limited role, the Socialist Party hardly exists at all, and the Communist Party is still small. The vast body of toiling masses remain under the political sway of the capitalist class, supporting in the main the Democratic Party.

An old-time Gompers argument against forming a labor party was that the organized labor movement was much too weak numerically to

support such a party successfully; but this nonsense has long since become clearly obsolete. The trade unions of today, with their 16 million members, are obviously potentially strong enough to serve as the basis of a powerful party of labor and its political friends. This strength would be greatly augmented if the present negotiations between the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. should result in actual labor unity. Organized labor, plus the Negro people, the working farmers, and the various other democratic strata that can be counted upon as the natural supporters of a broad labor-farmer party, constitute an overwhelming majority of the American people, and, if united and properly led, they would be a decisive political force.

Numerous reasons combine to ex-

plain the basic fact that the working class of this country has not yet embarked upon the road of independent political action. These reasons include the cunningly disruptive policies of the demagogic bourgeois politicians, the powerful anti-labor party pressures of the reactionary trade-union bureaucracy, the demoralizing effects of current Keynesian (Rooseveltian) illusions of progressive capitalism, and the failure over the decades, first of the Socialist Party, to carry on an educational campaign, in season and out, for the formation of a broad labor party. Nor did the Communist Party campaign steadily for the slogan. But the basic reason why there is no mass labor party in the United States is economic—the fact that the working masses in this country do not, as yet, feel such powerful economic pressures of low wages, unemployment, etc., as to impel them to break through every obstacle and to launch a great party of their own.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, specifically in the far-reaching Granger, Greenback, and Populist movements, the workers and farmers, under the heavy economic stress of the times, made repeated and persistent, if nevertheless unsuccessful, efforts to establish a broad independent political movement. Also, amid the economic and political hardships during and following World War I, these joint forces made a big farmer-labor party effort, culminating in the Presidential candidacy of Robert M. La Fol-

lette in 1924. And as a result of the great economic crisis of 1929-33 and the growing danger of fascism and war, the working class developed much political activity, but this did not reach the stage of launching a separate political party, save in New York and a few other states.

During and since World War II the workers have displayed little independent political action, and the same is largely true of their usual political allies. Wartime and post-war "prosperity," with steady jobs for the workers and comparatively good prices for the farmers' products, explain basically the relative mass political backwardness. That there has not been a powerful labor-farmer independent political movement in this country following World War II, is a reflection of the relatively strong position of American imperialism during this period.

During the past generation the trade unions, departing gradually from the rigid apoliticalism of the old Gompers regime, have engaged increasingly in political action. But this has remained within the framework of bourgeois political thinking and bourgeois organizational controls. One of the most decisive steps in breaking this bourgeois tutelage of the workers and in the latter's beginning to develop a genuinely proletarian political program and organization will be precisely the eventual formation of the mass labor-farmer party.

It would be stupid, of course, to suppose that the present two-party

political situation can long endure—with the gigantic American working class, although powerfully organized in trade unions, continuing to tail along after the Democratic Party, with the general result that the workers remain practically unrepresented in the national, state, and local legislative bodies of the nation. For example, among 333 of the contestants for seats in the House in last November's elections, according to the *N. Y. Times* (November 1), only six were workers—trade-union leaders—and but sixteen were dirt farmers. The only ones who can believe that such a political absurdity will be permanent are the "American exceptionalists" of various stripes, based on their silly notions that the United States economic system is not actually capitalism at all and that in this country we have no real capitalist and working classes.

Obviously, tied in as they have been for generations, with the bourgeois parties (chiefly the Democratic Party), a big shock will be needed to shift the workers from their present political moorings, and to launch them upon a course of independent political action. And such a shock is certainly in the making. The basic reality of the American situation is that this country is now heading towards economic and political crises which ultimately will make irresistible the need for independent worker political action expressed through a broad political party of the working class and its political allies.

CRISIS FACTORS IN THE UNITED STATES

Capitalism in the United States, as an organic part of the world capitalist system, is involved in the developing breakdown of that system. The world capitalist system is thoroughly sick and constantly getting sicker. During the last 37 years world capitalism has not only lost over one-third of the world's population to the camp of Socialism, and the markets that go with them, but in so doing, it has also lost many of its richest fields for reaping imperialist super-profits—Russia, China, Poland, Bulgaria, Indo-China, North Korea, etc., once having been very favored preserves in this respect for imperialist exploiters. Besides, in the colonies and semi-colonies that are left to it, monopoly capital also is finding it more and more difficult to extract super-profits—what with the rising spirit of nationalism in all these countries, the high price of maintaining big armies there, the costly subsidizing of puppet governments, etc. This is a disastrous situation for the imperialist powers, which are more and more being compelled, in their drive for maximum profits, to extra-exploit their own peoples under the present feverish armament production.

Following World War II, the capitalist countries of the West, it is true, have been "enjoying" a considerable economic boom; industrial production has gone up in Western Europe since the immediate pre-war

years, and in the United States the national output had doubled during the same period. But this is an unhealthy growth, based principally upon the reparation of the immense natural damages and commodity shortages caused by the war, and upon huge preparations for another world war. In Western Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and many other capitalist countries, the real wages of the workers are still below what they were before the war. Thus, not only has mass purchasing power in general relatively declined, but capitalism has also lost its former market controls over many countries that have since taken the road to Socialism. All this feeds the general capitalist crisis.

The general crisis of capitalism, in accord with the law of the uneven development of capitalism, does not grow at an even pace in all countries and at all times. Its tempo varies, and thus it hits some countries more devastatingly than others. So far the United States has escaped lightly many of the ravages of the general crisis of the world capitalist system. But this is only a temporary and illusory phenomenon. As in other capitalist countries, elementary contradictions and antagonisms are at work that must eventually culminate in serious economic and political crises, and, therefore, in a deepgoing radicalization of the working class and of other democratic strata. It is, consequently, in this general setting that the perspective for a labor-farmer party in the United

States must be considered.

The drive for world conquest and war, so aggressively pushed by Wall Street and its obedient Truman and Eisenhower governments since the end of World War II, which is fundamentally a product of the deepening general crisis of capitalism, is a program which cannot possibly free it from the strangling coils of that crisis. Should the Washington atomaniacs succeed in launching the world war that they want so badly, this could only result in a major holocaust for world humanity and in a final catastrophe for the international capitalist system. If, however, unable to precipitate their planned-for war (as seems more and more to be the case in the face of growing world peace pressure), Wall Street continues on with its synthetic cold war, involving gigantic armaments expenditures, this would also turn out to be a road to crisis through the growing exhaustion of the peoples of the capitalist world, including this country. And even if the capitalist United States, led by a reactionary government, should find itself forced by economic necessity to reduce heavily its arms expenditures (without adopting a progressive economic program to alleviate it), this, too, would help to precipitate and deepen the economic crisis.

The capitalist world is now heading toward a severe economic crisis. Unemployment is beginning to reappear upon a mass scale in various capitalist countries—West Germany,

Japan, Italy, Austria, France, Great Britain, etc. The United States, the stronghold of world capitalism, is also displaying serious signs of developing economic crisis. Industrial production here from mid-1953 to mid-1954 fell by an average of about ten percent, with steel, mining, textiles, automobiles, etc., off from fifteen to thirty percent. Some five million workers are wholly or partially unemployed, and stockpiles of commodities are growing. Agriculture is also down, and it is flying distress signals. Meanwhile, capitalist profits in the United States have soared from \$6½ billion in 1939 to \$45 billion in 1953. The meaning of all these facts is that this, like other capitalist countries, is facing an economic crisis. Nor can the projected re-arming of West Germany and Japan or the Keynesian pump-priming policies of the Government do more than to delay temporarily the onset of this economic breakdown.

Another manifestation of the increasing general sickness of world capitalism is the present threatening growth of fascism in a number of countries. Fascism, as the Communists long ago made clear, is not a sign of strength but of weakness in the capitalist regime developing it. It is a manifestation of the fact that the ruling class, finding it increasingly difficult to rule by customary bourgeois-democratic methods has to resort to fascist means of demagoguery and violence. A definite re-growth of fascist trends, usually under American cultivation, is to be

found in West Germany, Japan, Italy, various Latin-American countries, etc. Especially the United States itself is manifesting a sharp development of fascist *tendencies*. McCarthyism and other breeds of fascist ideology have already reached the stage where they have become a national danger, and they have potential recruits in the Dixiecrat Jim Crowers. The expansion of fascist methods in this country is a sure sign that all is not well with Wall Street—its war program in particular, and its economic system in general. The rising fascist danger, involving as it does growing attacks upon the organizations and freedoms of the working class, the Negro people, and other democratic strata, is a potent breeder of political crisis and intensified class struggle.

POLITICAL STIRRINGS OF THE WORKING CLASS

The continuance of the war danger, the worsening of the economic situation, and the rise of the menace of fascism, which fundamentally are expressions in the United States of the deepening general crisis of world capitalism, will inevitably produce a growing radicalization of the working class, which will offer most favorable conditions for the formation of a broad labor-farmer party. Evidences of this increased militancy of the workers and of their political allies in this country are to be found upon all sides. As the Communist Party *Program* states:

There are signs of a new awakening

in our land. Larger sections of the workers and of the people generally are beginning to speak up for peace and for a program of peace-time jobs. A powerful anti-McCarthy grass-roots movement is developing. The opposition to the Eisenhower Administration is growing. . . . The collision between the people and the foreign and domestic policies of McCarthyism must grow in volume and intensity.

In the fight for world peace a grave handicap for the workers is that their top labor leaders, the Meanys, Reuthers, *et al.*, are tied up in a united front with monopoly capitalism in support of the latter's program of imperialist expansion and war. Often they are more belligerent in their anti-Soviet hatred than even the capitalists themselves. This class collaboration opens a source of filthy imperialist poison into the ranks of organized labor. Nevertheless, there is a profound pro-peace sentiment throughout the mass of the workers. Despite their being more or less contaminated by anti-Soviet propaganda, they decidedly do not want war. Consequently, they have been active participants in the many movements in the United States that have helped block the plans of the American warmongers to continue and spread the Korean and Indo-Chinese wars, to carry the war into People's China, to militarize the American people, and the like.

Throughout the world there is now a very powerful and constantly rising mass peace sentiment, against

the capitalist warmongers and for policies of peaceful co-existence between the capitalist and socialist countries. The American working class and other democratic strata, notwithstanding many confusions and betrayals by their leaders, are essentially sympathetic with this developing world peace movement. This means basically that in the oncoming period the question of the fight for real peace policies will become increasingly a mass political issue in the United States.

In the fight against the developing economic crisis the rising militancy of the workers and their political allies is more pronounced. The *Program* of the Communist Party correctly states that "the American people are no longer going to accept hard times as just hard 'luck' or as the process by which individuals are made more rugged under capitalism. They refuse to blame themselves or fate for mass unemployment. They expect the economic system and the government to guarantee them jobs at a living wage as workers, and a living income as farmers." In this spirit both the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. have adopted anti-depression programs and, along with the working farmers, they made the economic question a decisive issue in the election campaign. The higher militancy of the workers is exhibited also in their willingness to strike for substantial wage increases, even in the face of heavy unemployment and slack industry.

In the fight against McCarthyism, the most open and virulent form of American fascism, the militancy of the workers is also definitely upon a rising scale. Nearly all the labor and progressive organizations in the country have taken a constructive stand on this general question, and they are making an increasing opposition to the various anti-labor bills that are being pushed by organized reaction. Fascism in the United States is a malignant and growing danger, and the labor movement, despite its corrupt and conservative top leadership, will find itself constrained to fight against it with more and more clarity and resolution.

The rising militancy of the workers and their allies was to be seen clearly in the November 1954 elections. They evidently wanted to deal a heavy blow against the Eisenhower regime and political reaction. But they achieved this in only a limited and distorted form, because the leaders of the Democratic Party, the organization in which the working masses placed their main reliance, refused to fight vigorously for the basic issues raised by the people. That is, the Democratic leaders, including the top labor-union bureaucrats, refused to attack outright Eisenhower and his policies. They did not raise the question of peace but let the Republicans demagogically pose as the party of peace, they abandoned the issues of McCarthyism and Negro rights altogether, and they made but a weak fight upon questions of unemployment and the

plight of the farmers—the central issues in the campaign. This flagrant sabotage of the people's interests took place because the Democratic leaders do not differ basically on policy from the Republicans. The general result was to rescue the Eisenhower forces from a major defeat.

THE INFLUENCE OF RISING SOCIALIST PRESTIGE

Basic factors in radicalizing the workers and in moving them towards independent political action and eventually toward a labor-farmer party, are the continuing war danger, the worsening economic situation, and the rising fascist threat. But there is still another powerful factor, of ever-increasing importance, which must be taken into account. This is the rapidly soaring prestige of the Soviet Union, People's China, and the People's Democracies of Europe and Asia, which are exerting an ever-greater influence upon the workers and other democratic forces in the world. To distort and destroy this socialist prestige has always been a basic aim of predatory imperialism.

When the Russian Socialist Revolution took place in November 1917 this had a tremendously inspiring effect upon the workers of the world. It was an elementary factor in the ensuing revolutions in Middle Europe, which swept away the autocratic monarchies of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey, and it

produced reverberations throughout the whole Asian and Latin-American colonial and semi-colonial worlds. During the next years, the Soviet Union was immersed in the overwhelming tasks of building its industries from the ground up, and revolutionizing agriculture, tasks which inevitably required endless work and severe hardships upon the part of the working masses. The capitalists, with the help of the Social Democrats, by carrying on an endless, lying campaign of red-baiting, were obviously able largely to misrepresent and slander what was going on in the U.S.S.R. and thus to diminish the prestige of Socialism among large sections of the world's workers.

The U.S.S.R., however, went into another period of tremendously expanded political prestige among the world's exploited masses as a result of its decisive struggle against world fascism, especially from the early 1930's and all through World War II. This enhanced Soviet prestige made an untenable situation for the capitalists. During the cold war years, again with the eager assistance of Social Democracy, they therefore launched an unprecedented campaign of red-baiting and Soviet-baiting, as a basic part of their drive for world conquest through another great war. With this campaign of ideological poison and terrorism, they undoubtedly were able to make it appear to vast numbers of workers in the capitalist countries, above all in the United States, that the

Soviet Union was an imperialist menace to the peace of the world. The tremendous Chinese Revolution, as well as those in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Indo-China, and Northern Korea, were condemned as simply the results of Soviet aggression and as a threat to world democracy. All this tended again to diminish the constructive influence of the Socialist countries upon the labor movement of the world.

But the Soviet Union, People's China, and the People's Democracies generally, are at present going into a fresh period of immense political prestige among the toilers of the world. This is because they have blunted the war drive of the imperialists, and they are now in a period when their high culture, democratic life, and increasing mass well-being are becoming so strikingly obvious that all the world must recognize them. Nothing the capitalists can do will be able to keep the Socialist sun henceforth from shining clearer and brighter over the face of the earth or to prevent the workers from experiencing its warming glow.

The current great leap forward of the U.S.S.R. and People's China is already having pronouncedly constructive effects upon the workers and other democratic strata throughout the capitalist world. This is evidenced, among other facts, by the ever-larger number of delegations—labor, cultural, and political, that are now being exchanged between the

two greatest countries of Socialism and many capitalist lands. The general result of all this is a stimulating effect upon the labor movement of the world, inspiring its fighting spirit and giving it clearer direction and aims. Despite everything that Wall Street and its labor-leader lackeys may do against it, this rising socialist world influence will penetrate and dissolve the present thick fog of slanderous red-baiting and it will exert a powerfully constructive effect also upon the American labor movement. Therefore, in estimating the factors making for independent political action, this basic one must be counted in.

TOWARD THE LABOR-FARMER PARTY

The above-described forces, growing out of the war danger, the economic crisis, and the menace of fascism, plus the effects of the swiftly rising prestige of world Socialism, are tending inevitably to produce a labor-farmer party in the United States. The job of this article is not to speculate as to just when such a party may actually come into existence as a major political factor, but to point out the basic trends towards it and to emphasize some of the elementary tasks we confront in this general connection.

It is obvious, however, that the situation in the United States at present is not yet ripe for the immediate launching of a broad labor-farmer party. Consequently, our

task in this respect contains a large element of agitation and propaganda. The workers and their allies must be taught the imperative need for independent political action, which finally means a labor-farmer party. They must be made to understand that the logical goal of their present political strivings and of their present urgent political needs is precisely the formation, in due time, of a great party of the working masses and their political friends. It was an historic mistake of our Party not to have persisted, year in and year out, to agitate for a labor-farmer party.

The labor-farmer party, of course, cannot be built simply by propaganda, however essential this may be. It can develop only out of the broad struggles of the masses, led by the working class. Nor can these movements be merely election campaigns and parliamentary activities. The labor-farmer party must grow out of the whole complex of struggles, economic and political, of the working class, the Negro people, the working farmers, and other democratic strata of the people. The fight for the labor-farmer party, by the same token, must, in turn, serve to strengthen all the phases of the mass struggle, to politicalize them, and to make them more conscious of the labor-farmer goal to which they are tending.

In the cultivation of independent political action by the working class and its allies, the main present task is to educate, organize, and activate

the masses now affiliated politically to the Democratic Party, and in a lesser degree, to the Republican Party. It is of tremendous importance that the Communist Party *Program* clearly points out this present stage of the fight for independent political action by the working class. As our Party *Program* states:

The two-party system is still the form through which the overwhelming majority of the American people now express themselves on politics. Except in special local and state situations, there is no immediate prospect that decisively large masses will break away from the existing two-party structure. Under these circumstances the decisive sections of organized labor, without which a mass third party is impossible, are first attempting to fight out the issues within the ranks of the Democratic Party.

This means that the Communist Party must turn its attention decisively to the masses now following bourgeois political leadership. As our *Program* states, we must support and stimulate such organizations as the Labor League for Political Education (A. F. of L.) and the Political Action Committee (C.I.O.), as well as the whole body of the trade unions, N.A.A.C.P., farmers' organizations, youth movements, etc. Our agitation must saturate the masses with a spirit for independent political action. It must stimulate all the democratic strata to develop a political coalition movement, to build their own election machinery, and, as our *Program* puts it, "to come

forward as a distinct political force even within the framework of the present two-party system." We must also begin sharply to pay more attention to the farmers. Many persons may be surprised to learn that a generation ago the Communist Party exerted a powerful influence among mid-west working farmers.

To create this strong working coalition organization and movement of the workers and their allies within the Democratic (and Republican) Party is the first organizational stage in the development of independent political action. It is the stage we are now in and it demands our major attention. It is the line along which our Party is now beginning its campaign to defeat the reactionaries in 1956. The ultimate stage will be the launching when the situation has eventually ripened, of a broad labor-farmer party. As we have seen above, basic forces are at work that are tending to place the formation of such a party upon the political agenda in the United States.

The general and specific demands for the independent political action movement, particularly in its present preliminary phase, are fully stated in the *Program* of the Communist Party, entitled, *The American Way to Jobs, Peace, Equal Rights and Democracy*. It is, therefore, unnecessary here to reiterate in detail these demands, corresponding to the most urgent daily needs of the workers, the Negro people, the working farmers, and other democratic strata in this country. An all-out fight for

the Party's Program is fundamental not only for the coalition in the old parties but also in the general struggle for an eventual labor-farmer party.

SOME DANGERS TO AVOID

In carrying out this general political line we must be alert to avoid serious dangers of both a "Left"-sectarian and a Right-opportunist character. The "Left" mistakes would lead us into premature organizational steps in founding the labor-farmer party and thus isolate us from the masses in the trade unions and in the old parties. The Right mistakes would tend to make us lose ourselves in the masses, to tail after them, and to depend upon mass spontaneity. Both types of errors will flourish in our political work from now on and we must make a two-front fight against them.

One of the worst "Leftist" errors that we could fall into would be to try to precipitate the formation of the labor-farmer party without there first being a sufficient mass base for it, especially among the trade unions. At the moment, this danger may not be a very active one, but it has played a highly injurious role in past years. It was a basic error which we repeated several times in the big farmer-labor party La Follette movement of 1919-1924, and it was also a factor in the Wallace-Progressive Party campaign of 1948, and of various other movements in our Party's history. We may be sure, too, once the labor-farmer movement begins

to get under way in a mass sense, that we will again have to face this dangerous "Leftist" tendency to go off half-cocked regarding the actual founding of the new party. There can be no serious labor-farmer party without decisive trade-union support.

To guard against such errors, we must, from the outset, realize clearly that it is of the specific nature of the movement for working class independent political action in this country at this time that, throughout its various phases of development, even in the beginning, organizational steps for the labor-farmer party must be taken only on the basis of a broad mass trade-union following. This means also, especially when the movement puts up independent election candidates, that generally these must have a practical chance of winning, or at least of making a good showing at the polls. The brick-by-brick method that we use primarily in the building of the Communist Party will not suffice to build the labor-farmer party—here we must work upon the basis of a mass-party strategy and tactics at all stages of the party's development.

This implies that we have to be resolutely opposed to all premature splits and wishful-thinking policies of building the labor-farmer party from the ground up, without regard to the developing political movements of the workers, especially the organized workers, in the mass following of the bourgeois parties. This is not to ignore the presumption that, in the course of the work, undoubt-

edly there will develop many instances when, confronted by a choice between reactionary candidates, the workers and their allies will find it necessary to advance independent election tickets. In such cases, candidates must be boldly put forth—we must not support reactionaries because they are endorsed by the trade-union leadership. Organizations like the American Labor Party and the Progressive Party, can play a vital role in placing necessary independent candidates. On this basis such parties should be built and their campaigns supported.

Independent parties should abandon the traditional sectarian practice of Left parties of functioning simply as propaganda and protest movements, by putting up full-scale city, state, and national election tickets as a routine agitational matter, and of gathering votes indiscriminately without a tactical political plan. This type of unorganized political activity is confusing and disruptive to the work inside of the Democratic and Republican parties, and it could also lead to serious negative political consequences. Under the American election system of counting each state's electoral votes en bloc, even a few thousand misplaced votes, conceivably could hand an important state's electoral vote, and, therefore, possibly even a national political victory, to the reactionary forces. This would defeat the workers' whole purpose. The independent labor parties or tickets, therefore, and there will undoubtedly be many of these as the

movement for independent political activities matures, should give up all idea of an indiscriminate search for votes and begin to concentrate their slates only in specific districts where the movement assumes a mass character. They should coordinate all such independent political activities strictly in accordance with the work being carried on within the bourgeois parties by organized labor and its allies. Independent general election tickets, whether local, state, or national, at this stage at least, should be put up only under special circumstances; that is, only where they are tactically necessary, and only after serious consideration of the probable results of such slates.

Under the general head of when to split or not to split from the old parties, special attention must be paid to the experiences of the American Labor Party in New York State, especially in its early years. For a considerable period this organization, with a huge mass following, functioned as a political party, without actually breaking contact with the progressive forces within the Democratic Party. The Commonwealth Federation in Washington state, of the same period, was virtually a party within the Democratic Party. A generation ago the Non-Partisan League also had a similar, and even more effective experience, with regard to the Republican Party among the farmers of the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana. The tactical significance of such experiences indicates that a split with either the

Democratic or Republican party is not always immediately practical. Labor's political experience also teaches that independent political action, with the placing of independent candidates, may occur not only under the specific form of political parties, but also of committees, blocs, labor tickets and other types of organization. And when local or state labor parties are formed, it by no means follows that these must everywhere and always put up complete slates of candidates. The New York and Northwest experiences (not to mention California and elsewhere) must be carefully evaluated in working out the general tactical line in conducting the fight inside the bourgeois parties and also in the eventual building of the labor-farmer party.

The Right-opportunist mistake that we must especially avoid, and it is one that we have to be conscious of at the present time, would be for the workers' political movement to become the tail to the Democratic Party. This would make it a prey to disastrous "lesser-evil" policies, and it would from the outset sentence it to futility and ultimate demoralization and defeat. To avert this danger we must bear clearly in mind the following major propositions:

a) That the Democratic Party is a party of monopoly capital and is dedicated to carrying out the main Wall Street policies of maximum profits, imperialist expansion, ultra-reaction, and war. Never did monopoly capital prosper more in both

its domestic and foreign policies than during the recent twenty years of Democratic rule. Traditionally, the Republican Party has been the favored party of big capital, but ample recent experience demonstrates that when, due to the Republican Party discrediting itself by ultra-reactionary policies, the masses elected the Democratic Party to power, the monopolists have made full and effective use of it—not only in the Dixiecrat South, but also in the North and West.

b) That it is impossible for the workers and their allies to capture the Democratic Party and to reorganize it into a progressive organization—a labor-farmer party in the service of the common people. To think otherwise would be a political absurdity. As the class struggle intensifies and the working masses raise sharply more and more elementary working-class demands, the Democratic Party, run by capitalist reactionaries, will become less and less able to contain these rebellious masses. This perspective is in line with class struggle experience throughout the world, of the working class advances towards independent political action. The Communist Party *Program* is altogether correct in stating that "Labor will find that the many important battles it must wage within the Democratic Party, decisive though they may be in checking the immediate danger of McCarthyism, will not transform that party into a labor-farmer party."

c) That from the beginning the working class and its allies must inevitably orient towards eventually creating a broad independent party. As our Party's *Program* puts it: "Labor must set its sights in the direction of a great party of its own, a party without Wall Street financiers, corrupt underworld racketeers, or Southern Dixiecrats—in short a true united front party of labor and the common man."

During the period of the Roosevelt New Deal the workers won many economic and political reforms, while generally operating politically within the framework of the Democratic Party. These gains were due primarily to the high militancy of the workers, Negro people, and poor farmers during these years. However, history will hardly repeat itself in this general respect. That is, in view of the worsening position of American capitalism, both at home and abroad, the Democratic Party will never be able to retain within its ranks and control the rebellious masses, once they again go on the march—that is, if the Left and progressive forces are alert to their tasks. The builders of the eventual labor-farmer party should, therefore, concern themselves with the Democratic and Republican parties, not in the illusion that these parties can be rebuilt into progressive political organizations capable of serving the needs of the working class, but because in their general following are large masses of workers who must needs be organized in their

present organizational affiliations to block the plans of the warmongers and fascists, and as the first stage of the labor-farmer party movement. The danger of the "lesser evil" theory must be constantly guarded against.

THE LEADING ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS

The most tragic fact of present-day American political life is that the working class, by and large, is still tied politically to the leading strings of the major capitalist parties, principally the Democratic Party. The very heart of the movement for independent working class political action is precisely to break this bourgeois tutelage and to develop an independent political program and eventually a party for labor and its allies. The workers must be taught the fact that they are potentially the real leaders of the nation and cannot possibly drag along after their worst enemy—Big Business.

In carrying out this historic political task, obviously, at this period, the masses cannot be directly led by the Communist Party; nevertheless, a key role can and must be played by our Party. We must be on guard, especially in this period of sharp government persecution of our Party and of the whole Left, of tendencies to rely merely upon the spontaneity of the masses. Spontaneity is a decisive factor and little can be done without it, but left to itself it is altogether insufficient to carry the workers to real victories. Marxist-

Leninist leadership is indispensable, and realizing this, we must combat every effort of the red-baiters and warmongers to destroy our Party. We must fight to keep our leaders from going to prison and to free those who are already in jail, and we must exert every effort to have our Party display the utmost political activity and to strengthen its contacts with the masses.

The battle to break the bourgeois political leadership of the workers is not something that must wait until the situation has ripened to the point when a labor-farmer party can actually be launched on a mass scale. On the contrary, this fight must be waged militantly even now, in this preliminary stage of the work. Thus, for example, the movement for independent political action must break sharply with the old Gompers political formula of "Reward your friends and punish your enemies," which still remains essentially the policy of the top leadership of both the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. This policy, which expresses itself in the support of all sorts of bourgeois fakery and demagogues, has resulted in American labor, as we have already remarked, being left practically without any solid representation in the legislative bodies of this country. Contrary to the Gompersite political bankruptcy, the labor-farmer party movement, also in its preliminary stages within the two capitalist parties, must fight for, as its election candidates, genuine representatives of the working class, the Negro

people, the working farmers, etc. By the same token, the movement must fight to raise political issues that are of real importance to the toiling masses of this country, as expressed by the Party's program for Jobs, Peace, Equal Rights and Democracy. This general line must be followed until the working class and its allies have smashed the bourgeois political fetters that now shackle them and have achieved an independent political program and organization.

The greatest political weakness of the workers and their allies during the Roosevelt regime was not to have then laid the basis for a broad labor-farmer party. That the masses would have supported such a movement was demonstrated by the important successes won during these years by the American Labor Party in New York and by the Progressive Party in California and elsewhere. Considerable political activity was manifested at that time by the workers through P.A.C. and similar bodies in the A. F. of L., but the bourgeois and labor politicians of the Democratic Party were on the alert and defeated all real tendencies towards mass independent working-class political action.

Especially during the war, organized labor was in a strong position to have begun to develop working-class initiative and leadership politically. In addition to other elementary steps, the very least that should have been done, therefore, was to demand that Roosevelt deal with the labor movement upon a coalition

basis. But all this was anathema to the Greens and Murrays and their likes. They had no political conception other than to tail along after the bourgeoisie, greedily devouring such political crumbs as the bosses saw fit to throw to the workers. Earl Browder, with his absurd illusions about the "progressive" character of American monopoly capitalism, shared fully in the Green-Murray opportunism and infected our Party with it. He even outdid such reactionaries in actively opposing every proposal to bring forward the workers as an independent political force during the war.

At the present time but a small section of the trade-union movement stands committed to the formation of a labor-farmer party—only the U.A.W.-C.I.O., the progressive independent unions, and a few others—hardly as many as 2,000,000 organized workers of a total of 16,000,000, have in any way recently endorsed it. But under sharp economic and political pressure (and with good work by the advocates of the labor-farmer party) the number of the supporters of working-class political action can swiftly mushroom, as has been seen upon several occasions during the past 60 years. Our Party must be fully aware of the political potentialities of the situation.

TOWARD THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The elections of 1956 obviously will be highly important. Already

the two major parties are preparing for them. The Right-wing Republicans, the pro-fascist McCarthyites, are striving to capture the Republican Party or to split it; while Eisenhower, with his intense peace demagoguery, is clearly aiming at the Republican nomination and a second term. The Democrats, flushed by their November victory and confident of winning a bigger one in 1956, are counting themselves as "halfway back to the White House." The Communist Party also will, from now on, pay basic attention to this developing struggle.

The Program of our Party remains valid for the coming Presidential elections. It gives a clear line on the specific demands of the workers, the Negro people, the working farmers, and of other democratic strata, and its central slogan for Jobs, Peace, Equal Rights and Democracy clearly meets the elementary needs of the people. The general tactical line of the Party is also correct for the coming campaign; that is, to mobilize the masses politically within the framework of the two major political parties, chiefly in the Democratic Party, where they are now affiliated.

As the national Presidential struggle unfolds, we must clearly realize that, tactically speaking, there are two phases to our political work—that within the bourgeois parties, and that in the shape of independent candidacies. These two phases, of course, cannot be equated in importance with each other; the work within the bourgeois parties is vastly

more important than that of supporting independent candidates. At this stage it constitutes our basic tactical line. Nevertheless, we must also pay close attention to the lesser question of independent candidates. Far better than in 1954, our work both within and without the bourgeois parties must be fully coordinated. It would be folly to call upon the workers to defeat the Republican (and also Democratic) reactionaries, and then to follow a contradictory policy outside of putting up independent candidates indiscriminately, a policy which, as pointed out above, could lead to serious working-class defeats and the negation of our work within the bourgeois parties.

As our Party *Program* indicates, there are no signs of a mass political orientation of the workers in the di-

rection of a labor-farmer party during the 1956 election campaign. Nevertheless, we must always be conscious that we are living in a period of rapidly mounting class tensions and of possible swift political realignments. This is indicated by such developments as the sharp crystallization of the Right wing in the Democratic Party, the collision between the Eisenhower and McCarthy forces, and the coming together of the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. In any event, while carrying on our work for independent political action by the workers within the bourgeois parties, we must always be conscious that we are eventually heading towards the creation of a broad independent political organization, a labor-farmer party, and we must teach the masses this elementary fact.

The March issue of Political Affairs will contain a Resolution of the National Committee of the Communist Party, analyzing the 1954 elections and offering perspectives for the immediate future—ed.