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ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By M. Morrison

August 2, 1944

What course should we follow in the coming presidential election campaign? Since there will be no Labor Party candidate, the situation would be ideal for running a candidate of our own -- especially in view of the imprisonment of the candidate and other members of the party. The regrettable fact remains, however, that we cannot get on the ballot and this eliminates the possibility of conducting a campaign for our own candidate. I consider a write-in campaign, under present circumstances, the equivalent of no campaign. Actually there is only one course open to us, if we want to participate actively in the coming election campaign -- and that is to offer critical support to the Socialist Party. I am assuming that its candidate will be on the ballot in quite a few states.

We are, in effect, confronted by a choice of non-participation in the campaign or critical support to the S.P. The simplest and easiest solution is to abstain, but for a serious political party, only the most exceptional circumstances would justify abstention in a presidential campaign. I can see no such circumstances at present. In an election where three parties appear on the ballot -- two openly capitalist and one running under the label of socialism (I am disregarding the Socialist Labor Party), the proper course for us to follow, where we are unable to get our candidate on the ballot, is to give critical support to the S.P. Especially is this true at present when a large number of workers has become disillusioned with Roosevelt. We must take advantage of their disillusionment and attempt to turn their attention to the idea of socialism. In general workers do not like to abstain from voting and we should not encourage them to do so. On the contrary we must encourage them to vote in such a way as to turn the movement of the workers in our general direction. In giving critical support to the S.P. we are, in essence, asking the workers to vote against capitalism and for the idea of socialism. We tell them plainly that it is the best means available, at the present moment, of showing their hostility to capitalism and their acceptance of the idea of socialism.

We must, of course, conduct our campaign on our own platform wherein we make all the necessary explanations and criticisms of the S.P. and its candidate. Thinking workers will find this course more understandable and more serious than one which tells them not to vote or which offers them no advice at all about voting. Should the discussion be favorable to critical support of the S.P. (or for that matter, in any case) our platform should deal mainly with the following three points:

- (1) Post-war problem -- presenting our solution to guarantee jobs to all workers and returned soldiers.
- (2) No interference with the right of the European masses to determine their own fate.
- (3) Labor party.

The last question is not exactly proper in a platform during a presidential campaign but we need not be formal about this matter. We are anxious to educate workers to realize the necessity of a Labor party and a presidential election affords us an opportunity to do so.

* * *

September 17, 1944

I am informed that the P.C. has sent out a letter stating our policy in the coming election campaign. If my information as to the contents of the letter is correct then, basing my judgment on the letter alone, I would say that there is no evidence whatever that the P.C., in arriving at its conclusion, followed the Marxist method.

The motion, presented by Morrison, to give critical support to the Socialist Party, had the following as its motivation: (I am assuming that the letter sent by the P.C. did not contain the motivation. That was wrong because the membership is entitled to know the basis of a "suggestion" or a motion. Naturally, the motivation was not fully developed, but it was enough to give the members something to discuss. In this particular instance the P.C. should have sent the motivation in the letter.)

Morrison starts from the proposition that a Marxist party abstains only under the most exceptional circumstances. I am not now considering a conscious boycott, but simply abstaining from participation. A revolutionary party is in duty bound to find some way, if it possibly can, to participate in the most active way in every important election campaign. If only capitalist parties are on the ballot we are compelled to abstain and we then tell the workers openly not to vote. There is nothing else we can do. But if there is any possibility to participate we must do so. A party that abstains because all the conditions are not favorable, a party that says nothing because it cannot say everything, does not follow the tradition of Bolshevism.

It may be argued that we are not abstaining since we intend to conduct a campaign around the Labor party issue. Let us not split hairs. It is abstaining if, in an election campaign, we do not run our own candidate and we do not tell the workers to vote for any other candidate.

The question can be put very simply: we offer our propaganda to the workers. A serious worker asks: whom shall I vote for now, since there is not as yet any Labor party? The answer must be: do not vote. This is abstentionism and nothing else.

Let us consider all the circumstances to see whether abstentionism must be followed in the coming campaign because there is no other way out. There is no Labor party conducting a campaign. We cannot run our own candidate. Because of the fact that our candidate would be in prison together with 17 others, that would be the indicated course (if we could get on the ballot). A write-in campaign is possible. But, under present circumstances, a write-in campaign is

equivalent to no campaign.

There are three parties that will appear on the ballot -- two openly capitalist and one running under the label of socialism (I am excluding the S.L.P.) Immediately the course should suggest itself of giving critical support to the S.P. and thus avoid abstaining. In general, when a party designating itself as socialist and believed by many workers to be socialist is on the ballot against capitalist parties it would be our proper course to give the socialist party critical support where we ourselves cannot get on the ballot. Very important factors should prevent us from following such a course, to avoid abstaining.

Let us further consider the present situation to determine whether there are any factors in favor of giving critical support to the S.P. All the evidence points to a great deal of dissatisfaction with the present administration, among the workers. We do not know exactly how deep it is and whether it will take the form of abstaining from voting or a turn to the Republican party. We do not know whether the dissatisfied worker will vote for Roosevelt as the lesser evil. This is the most probable course he will take.

What is our task under the circumstances? It is to take advantage of the dissatisfaction of a great many workers and help them take a course away from the capitalist parties, a course leading towards socialism.

Generally speaking, the workers want to vote and, unless we have no alternative, we should encourage them to do so and participate actively in the elections. In an election campaign where we do not have our own candidate and where there is a candidate of a party that in the eyes of many workers stands for socialism, by all means, encourage the dissatisfied worker to vote against the capitalist parties. Tell a worker not to vote and in all likelihood he will vote for what he considers to be the lesser evil. Tell him to vote against capitalism by voting for a party that calls itself socialist, with all the necessary explanations, and the likelihood is that you will indicate to the dissatisfied and serious worker a course that appears reasonable to him, a course that he will follow in preference to abstaining, a course that will aid him in following a direction leading to our party. It should seem quite obvious that the question "What course in the coming election campaign advances most the interests of the working masses and of our party -- abstention or critical support to the S.P.?" is not at all difficult to answer, if one takes all existing factors into consideration. To give critical support to the S.P. is demanded by the existing situation.

It goes without saying that giving critical support to the S.P. still means centering our campaign around our own platform. In the coming campaign the situation calls for a platform centering around the transitional demand of taking over the big industries and operating them under workers' control. Critical support means that we make all the necessary explanations and criticisms of the S.P. and its candidate. But instead of ending up by saying don't vote, we conclude by telling them to vote for the Socialist Party as a protest against the capitalist parties and as an indication to fight for socialism.

What is the approach of the P.C. to the whole question, at least, as indicated by the letter? Does it give an analysis of all the factors and indicate those factors? Does it ask the general question; which course -- abstention or critical support -- will further our general aims, under prevailing conditions? No! It simply lays down two general principles either of which would justify critical support to the S.P. The reasoning is not that of a Marxist, but of one who limits himself to a syllogism. It states a major premise; to justify critical support of a party, it must be a mass party, or it must take our position on the war; the minor premise is that the S.P. is not a mass party nor does it take our position on the war; the conclusion; no critical support. The whole approach to the question tends to show that very frequently those who shout loudest about Hegelian dialectics do not know how to use the Marxist dialectic method.

What the P.C. does is to isolate two factors -- very important ones, to be sure, and disregards all other factors. What it does is to mention those conditions which, if they existed, would make our problem very easy of solution.

Some months before he was assassinated, Trotsky proposed that we give critical support to the Stalinist party in the 1940 elections. He argued mainly, if I recollect correctly, that the Stalinist party took a position that the war at that time was an imperialist war and supporting the Stalinists on that basis would enable us to make close contact with the rank-and-file Stalinists. Trotsky had a specific purpose -- to get closer to the rank-and-file of the Stalinist party. The war attitude of the Stalinists was the opportunity to be utilized.

The P.C. rejected Trotsky's proposal. I had just completed the draft of an article supporting the proposal when the news of the murderous attack came and made it impossible for me to attend the party conference at which it was decided not to support the Stalinists.

If my memory serves me correctly, the reason for rejecting Trotsky's proposal was that it would create a rift between us and the progressive unionists with whom we had contact -- a reason bordering very close to opportunism. The important point is that when it came to rejecting critical support, the P.C. did not hesitate to find a factor other than the position of the Stalinists on the war. I admit that logically it can be said that naming a condition without which we can give critical support does not mean that if the condition existed we must give critical support. I mention the 1940 incident to show that there seems to be no hesitation to find reasons for abstaining.

Our tactics in every important election must be based on the factors that exist in that particular campaign. When in 1940 Trotsky advised critical support of the C.P. it was because he saw the possibility of achieving a certain objective under the conditions then prevailing. In the present election campaign we must ask ourselves; is there an objective favorable to us which can be achieved under prevailing circumstances by giving critical support to the S.P.? To answer that question Marxists must analyze all the factors and not formulate some general principle and determine our attitude exclusively on the basis of that general principle. I have indicated above

what objective we can hope to achieve by critical support of the S.P. It is to help the dissatisfied worker find a road away from capitalist parties.

If the S.P. were completely insignificant I would not advocate giving it critical support. It is, of course, not a mass organization, with roots in the masses. But we must recognize that its voting strength is far out of proportion to its organizational strength. The S.P. may not have three times the number of members we have, but it can poll 50 times the number of votes we can. We should not forget that many thousands of people still think of the S.P. as representing socialism; we must not forget that it has the advantage of a candidate who has been greatly publicized and who, in the eyes of many, stands for socialism. Ask this question; is it easier for our party members working in a shop to say; we think this and this of the S.P. and its candidate, but in view of the non-existence of a Labor party, in view of the fact that we cannot get on the ballot, and for the purpose of having you vote against capitalism and for socialism, we advise you to vote for Thomas. Or is it easier for him to say; There is no Labor party, don't vote for anybody.

It would have been far more correct for the P.C. to canvass our party members who come in contact with workers and discuss the question with them for the purpose of getting an idea what is the best way to approach the workers, than to decide on a basis of a general principle. Not that such a method can lead to absolutely correct conclusions, but it is certainly better than deciding on the basis of a general proposition, without any analysis of all the factors involved in the situation.

The same letter that notified the branches of the P.C. decision against critical support of the S.P. also informed the members that we would "utilize the campaign to put forth our Labor party position." If that means that our Labor party position becomes the central point of our election campaign, it is wrong through and through. It is evident that the great problem worrying the working masses is the problem of a job, after the war is over. It is the problem worrying the soldiers. Every party understands that and deals with it. Even on the basis of no critical support to the S.P., our platform and our propaganda must center on our solution to that problem. The transitional demand of taking over the industries, convert them to peace production under workers' control and assure every worker a job and high wages is the natural and absolutely necessary central demand. He who does not understand that, understands nothing about a Bolshevik approach to the present situation. The Labor party position is a secondary point -- important but secondary. What must be stressed is the objective and the struggle for it. We do not guarantee that a Labor party will achieve that objective; it is only a means of struggle and only if it struggles will it be valuable for the masses.

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LETTER FROM BAYONNE

September 23, 1944

To the Political Committee;

The Bayonne branch at its meeting on Friday, September 22, had a thorough-going discussion on the communication on our attitude toward the S.P. in the coming election, as proposed by the P.C. We unanimously did not agree with the position as advanced by the P.C. for the following reasons:

It is an unrealistic approach to a very practical question. Critical support for Thomas would in no way deter the advancement of our program of an Independent Labor Party. If anything, it would help us to advance the necessity for such a party. A vote for Thomas, as advocated and explained by us, would not be a vote for the program of the S.P. but rather as a protest vote aimed at the two capitalist, anti-labor candidates. This question is not of a principled nature but purely tactical in character -- as evidenced by our ability to support the S.P. candidates in Reading -- even with their program.

We have an opportunity to present a clear line to those workers (and we are confident that they are not few in number) who are fed up with the two parties and channelize their sentiments into a clear-cut protestation of this fact positively rather than in a negative fashion of refusing to vote at all.

In our experience, we find a positive position of this nature advantageous to us in our trade union work. We found workers supporting Thomas and wearing Thomas buttons. Naturally, we wouldn't consider supporting Thomas if a Labor Party were on the scene but we must utilize the tools and weapons we have on hand to build our party.

On the basis of these facts, we ask the P.C. to reconsider the position it has already adopted with the purpose of reversing themselves.

Bayonne Branch

* * *

OUR TACTIC 'IN THE 1944 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

By Jack O'Connell

The presidential election of 1944 is occupying the theater of politics again. It is stirring the imagination of a considerable section of the American workers and focusing the defeatism of others. And the best workers will want to know whom to vote for. Wall Street's Communist Party is running Roosevelt; the Socialist Labor Party and Socialist Party have a candidate; the Labor Party is still a good idea; and the SWP, it seems, will be outside again in 1944?

For a revolutionary party, and in particular the SWP, which is adding flesh to its roots in the trade union and stretching its branches into the workers' neighborhoods, for a workers' party to content itself in a consequential election with the notation to the

workers that "if there was a labor-party, we would support its candidate," is derelict and is a serious challenge to the rightfully vaunted preeminence of the party in the workers' movement.

Predicating ourselves upon the mistaken yearning for the inevitable rise of a labor party, no serious attitude appears to have been taken toward our participation as a party in the coming elections. We can simply state that we are passing this one by, with regrets of course, and even less realism about the fact that there will be no labor party in this election, and that by the next election the necessity of a labor party to the masses will probably be extinct.

It has been expected that a sledge-hammer blow from the Administration would make clear the need of a labor party. Not one, but tens of blows have fallen on the labor movement, but they seem to hit the nail and not the head! The trades union bureaucrats show that they cannot conceive of a labor movement, except by grace of the Administration and the government labor board machinery. Much that the DeLeonists have omened has become reality and it may count for them if we fail to supplant them on the electoral field.

The ability of the collaborationist labor leadership to strangle the aspirations of the workers indicates that actions on the economic field are as excluded today as when we adopted our policy of continnence in the union movement. We concluded that the workers would have to transfer their struggle onto a political plane. And if we cannot give them a labor party for 1944, we must, whenever and wherever possible, channelize the healthy desire of the workers to express themselves through the ballot.

In this most critical hour of world-capitalism the SWP proposes to lead the workers to power and a socialist world, and to do so with a flexible and concrete tactical program. The importance of participation in electoral actions at this time can be measured by our own enthusiasm at the success of the CCF and the fearful reluctance of the British ruling class to hold elections at all. With a revolution on the surface in Italy, the Balkans, and Denmark; with an explosion imminent in Germany and the relation of class forces on a world scale; with the spectre of greater economic privations under capitalism in the post-war world already haunting the workers in the increasing employment cutbacks; in short, with the last agony of imperialism intensified many-fold with mounting death and starvation tolls throughout the world, the Party in solidarity with the Fourth International is duty-bound to show a requisite political imagination and introduce itself as a full-fashioned political party before the American workers.

If our work is circumscribed by the impossibility of direct action on the economic trade-union field and the failure of the much desired labor party to materialize, we cannot retire to the position of being merely a propaganda party.

In this election we have recognized strong impulses on the part of the workers to turn away from the two old parties, and in the success of the Militant subscription drive we have proclaimed a new readiness of the workers to learn our ideas and turn toward

socialism. Is it not probable that these tendencies will find expression in the balloting? And how? Not so many workers will stay home as did in the off-year elections. The other parties of the labor movement are taking advantage of the election-forum and will present their ideas to these workers who take a more active interest in politics during the presidential election year and in the middle of a world war. They will give the workers a chance to register their desires and to feel their strength by giving them a candidate.

Electoral politics can be both overestimated and underestimated. They have a place in arousing the imagination of the workers and must be accorded a proportional place in our work. It may be true that the workers can gain the most by reading a selection of our literature; but it is not enough to tell them that we have no labor party candidate they can vote for, that they should read our paper, pamphlets and join us in the imperceptible cautious struggle to build a revolutionary socialist leadership in the trade unions. They want action -- a candidate and campaign to vote for -- and may turn to those parties that offer it. (There is evidence that the workers are doing just that). We cannot merely express regrets and leave the workers to the other parties. We correctly call ourselves a workers' mass party; and must therefore find a concrete answer for the worker in the election and find a concrete tactic for most advantageously exploiting the election.

The mistake of assuming the inevitability of a labor party arising rules out the appearance of our own party on the ballot. We are left with the only alternative of giving critical support to Norman Thomas in a manner consistent with our aims and organizationally fruitful, or -- expressing regrets and abstract theories about a labor party. A polemic as a substitute for a candidate will get very little hearing outside of New York City.

Immediately the objection, to critical support for Thomas, that we are trying to clarify the differences between the S.P. and our Party will arise, as if clarification were then impossible and that impossibility an argument against lending critical support. The same should hold true for critical support to a labor party candidate and the Communist Party if we had supported Browder as Trotsky correctly advocated in the last election. Are we not trying to distinguish ourselves from them? Moreover, critical support for the candidate of another party, if correctly managed, is a very good way of focusing attention on the differences. That it is and would have been technically impossible and financially unwise to enter our own party on the ballot, is nohow an argument against critical support for other candidates!

The Party should be made aware of the value of electoral activity. The Party took a step forward when it ran candidates in New York, New Jersey, and Minnesota. We were very anxious for the propaganda arena which the labor party would have afforded. And since it is too late to run Cannon, modestly in a few states, for president, we might very well exploit the candidacy of Thomas for a propaganda arena. We would be able to hold meetings under our own auspices to propagate our ideas around the immediate act of voting for Thomas at the polls. In like manner we would issue a pamphlet for mass sale

on a door-to-door and meeting basis. It should be kept in mind that many workers, particularly those new to politics and socialism, attach an exaggerated importance to their vote, preparing themselves emotionally for the act. And the act of voting socialist very often has the effect of psychologically re-conditioning them in that they have committed themselves and are bound, thus preparing them for further political development.

The intention here is not to over-evaluate electoral politics or contend that the question of our participation in one or this election will determine the outcome for the proletarian revolution, but simply to urge that a party close to the workers gains influence and strength, is more easily understood by giving the workers a candidate than when it says: "it doesn't look so hot boys, the Socialist Worker's Party doesn't have any labor party candidates to vote for, skip it." And right now we cannot speak of 1946 or '48.

If there are important groups and individuals in the labor movement and progressive circles who want a labor party because they are sick of the bourgeois parties, where will they go if they don't get one? Sit home? Some to PAC? Some to Thomas?

It is reasonable to expect that the Socialist Party stands a good chance of getting the support of some of these people and increasing their vote and weight. Whether they can concretize this organizationally is of no importance here. (We can.) For why is it impossible for us to get many of these workers who will go over directly to the SP and SLP columns, and even into those parties? Or get a hearing from them? We have a better program and more color.

Moreover, Trotsky appears to have been correct when in 1940 he proposed that the American party give critical support to Earl Browder of what is now Wall Street's Communist Party. Whatever objections prevailed are vague and would seem to have revolved around the question of how to explain to the anti-Stalinist petty-bourgeois intellectuals of that period. What appears to have motivated Trotsky must be that the workers needed a concrete answer on whom to vote for to vote against the war, and also to reach the CP members and followers.

The conditions requisite for support of another party are: 1) The workingclass origin and roots of a political party; 2) The immediate program and coloration of that party; 3) The strategical value of such support to us in developing the class struggle. Those conditions would seem to have been met by Browder in 1940.

The Socialist Party candidate cannot fill the bill in equal degree, but in the main, Thomas will represent a rallying ground for the anti-capitalist workingman's vote. The immediate program of the SP is for critical support of the war plus N. Thomas' recommendations to the bourgeoisie on how to manage their system and wars more virtuously. While not clear and consistent from the class point of view, they demand certain reforms, e.g. rising scale of wages to meet the rising cost of living; equal rights for negroes. . . . In the absence of a labor party they may, to repeat, very well get some of the support intended for a labor party. We cannot ignore the fact

that in a Presidential year, due to tradition, they can in some places reach larger audiences than we can, and many workers too, possibly collecting some of the anti-war vote besides. We surely have something to gain by exploiting their campaign, reaching their audiences and explaining our principle differences wherever possible.

While it is still necessary to carry on an agitation for a labor party, we should bear in mind that the labor party development is not necessarily occluded. It is very possible that the non-revolutionary leadership of the labor movement will continue to be so supine as to compel, under rapidly changing conditions, a direct turn of the proletariat to the banner of the revolutionary party.

July 24, 1944

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WHY THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE REJECTED THE PROPOSAL
TO GIVE CRITICAL SUPPORT TO THE SP
IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By John G. Wright

The Political Committee rejected the proposal that we give "critical support" to the SP in the 1944 presidential campaign because this proposal is purely formal and abstract in character. It is an arbitrary construction, arrived at through the method of drawing conclusions from analogies which do not at all fit the situation. There is only a superficial resemblance between this proposal and the classic examples of critical support advocated or applied in the Bolshevik movement. From these past examples just the opposite conclusions flow.

It is not difficult to demonstrate that the proposal to give critical support to the SP fulfills none of the primary conditions of the revolutionary utilization of parliamentarianism.

In the sphere of electoral activity, as in all other spheres, the Bolshevik approach is distinguished first and foremost by its concreteness. Truth is concrete. This is the first and most important law of the dialectic -- and of our political activity.

The Concreteness of Bolshevik Maneuvers

In its most general form the proposal amounts to our engaging in a maneuver. Now every maneuver takes as its starting point a specific relationship of forces. For it is easy to see that a maneuver which flies in the face of the actual correlations is hopeless to begin with.

But the proponents of this maneuver do not even bother to establish the correlation between our party and the SP. As a force in the labor movement today we are by far the more dynamic party. Here the question must be approached not from the standpoint of pure arithmetic but as a process. We are on the upgrade. Our movement

is being geared for a qualitative expansion of both its forces and activity. The SP, on the other hand, is a political fiction, or more correctly, a political ghost. It is in process of disintegration. All that remains are vestiges of what used to be essentially a small vote-getting machine, which once had some attractive power within certain layers of the working class.

The main task of Norman Thomas and his followers today is to perpetuate this fiction of the SP. Our task, if any, in relation to the SP is not in any way to nourish this fraud, but to expose it. In this connection it is false to draw qualitative distinctions between the SP and the SLP. The latter is merely in a more advanced stage of mummification. The SLP shows to the SP its true visage.

The proponents of the maneuver, in order to give it some semblance of reality, involuntarily paint up the SP. This is a trap. The Political Committee flatly rejects such a false viewpoint.

So far as the correlation of forces is concerned the proposal thus hangs suspended in mid-air.

Let us now see how matters stand in other important respects. We engage in a maneuver not simply for the sake of "doing something," that is, merely to make the record. That is not at all the way in which the party reveals its dynamic force. Essentially, what a parliamentary maneuver of "critical support" amounts to is this: Because of an existing relationship of forces, the majority of the workers, or an important section of the working class, are in the grip of certain illusions. Basing itself on these illusions the revolutionary party offers the workers to go through a specific experience together with them, warning in advance what the results will be.

Bolshevik Precedents

The outstanding features of such a maneuver may be summed up as follows: it has an address (it is clear at whom the maneuver is being directed); it has a clearly delineated basis (the specific mass illusions); it has a clearly defined aim (undergoing a certain experience with the masses, or a section of them) and the limits of the maneuver are clearly set in advance.

We shall illustrate our thought with two examples; 1) Lenin's proposal in the early days of the Communist International that the British CP give critical support to the Labor Party; 2) Trotsky's proposal in 1940 that we give critical support to Browder in the presidential elections.

Lenin's proposal was addressed to the overwhelming majority of the English workers. Lenin proposed that the English CP base itself on the illusions of the workers about their Labor Party leadership and say: We haven't the slightest illusion about the treacherous character and role of these Labor leaders, but you have. Very well, we will get together with you in order to place these gentlemen in power. Then through your own experience you will be able to gauge in practice the difference between what these treacherous leaders say

and what they actually do.

Lenin pointed out that such an experience was an indispensable part of the political education of the English workers. He wrote: ". . . Revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class, and this change is brought about by the political experience of the masses, and never by propaganda alone." ("Left-Wing" Communism, p. 66).

All the conditions of the maneuver which we listed above are clearly set forth and met in Lenin's proposal.

Lenin's proposal was directed at the majority of the working class, Trotsky's 1940 proposal was addressed exclusively to the American CP, embracing in its ranks politically advanced workers who were tending in a leftward direction at the time. Let us recall that this was the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact, when the Stalinists in order to cover up their treacherous role in the war advanced a pseudo-revolutionary anti-war position, singling out the Anglo-American imperialists, but keeping mum about the imperialist character of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The Stalinist followers and dupes were convinced that this was a genuinely Leninist position. Trotsky proposed that we base ourselves on this illusion, and offer to go through an experience with the Stalinist rank-and-file, warning them in advance, that Browder would shift his line the moment Stalin's foreign policy ran into a blind alley and required a sudden shift.

The Old Man advanced his proposal during discussions with our comrades in Coyoacan at the time; and then withdrew it because of the practical objections raised. He did not agree with those objections, but deferred to the opinion of Comrade Cannon and others.

How the Present Proposal Differs from Those Cited

In any case the essential similarity of the foregoing two proposals hardly requires additional comment.

What has the present proposal in common with them?

What is the basis of this maneuver? Are we to base ourselves on certain illusions of the SP followers? Nobody proposes this.

Is there then a significant section of American workers who cherish illusions about the SP? No one claims this.

Is there a possible nationwide movement on the part of workers or a significant section of the labor movement to vote for the SP as a "protest"? This argument -- the only half-serious one that could be advanced -- is not advanced by Comrade Morrison. The Milwaukee comrades do adumbrate this point. It is quite possible that in Wisconsin, because of the local situation, the old SP traditions, etc. there may be indications of such a trend. But this does not at all correspond with the facts nationally. There is no sign of such a trend nationally. It is impermissible to construct a national policy on the basis of an isolated situation in this or that locality.

The consensus of opinion is that the mood of the workers today is characterized by APATHY...an apathy which extends to all parties on the ballot.

What does the proposal to give Thomas critical support offer to these apathetic workers? It offers not that we go through an experience with them which they themselves are willing and determined to undergo; but just the opposite. It proposes that they go through a certain experience with us. This, you will note, is just the opposite course to the one proposed by Lenin in the 'twenties and by Trotsky in 1940.

The proposed maneuver, with a dubious starting point, lacks any basis. Moreover, it has no address. Or rather it points in two different directions: at the SP and the mass of disillusioned workers at one and the same time.

A juxtaposition of this proposal with those made by Lenin and Trotsky suffices to reveal its formal, abstract and arbitrary character. It falls apart under the least breath of criticism.

Ask yourselves; Why should the workers follow such an artificial prescription? Granting that they would be willing to listen to us: What possible argument can we give them why they shouldn't vote for us on a write-in campaign? (Comrade Morrison, incidentally, correctly dismisses such a campaign as a pure formality. Or why a vote for the SLP is not just as much a "protest" vote as one for Norman Thomas? Or just why abstention from voting isn't just as much an expression of protest as any of the above proposals.

The Party's Orientation and Tasks

Precisely because their proposal disregards the actual relationship of forces, and lacks the necessary basis among the masses themselves, they never stop to consider other key aspects of the question. Not the least of these, is our party's present orientation and its current tasks.

We are oriented toward workers without previous political affiliation. A large section of our party is now comprised of such recruits. We expect the most fruitful field of recruitment to come from those disillusioned with capitalist parties, and convinced of the necessity of forming a labor party. Precisely because the Trotskyists are widely identified as the only force today genuinely in favor of the labor party we stand to gain from the processes of disillusionment now gathering headway. How does the proposal square with this orientation? It runs counter to it.

Why should we interpose a proposal to vote for another party between ourselves and the workers who are now seeking a real solution to their problems? Why can't we utilize the presidential elections to put forward our position, patiently explaining to the workers just why they find themselves in the present position and just how their leaders are responsible for it?

The proponents of the maneuver have thought nothing out to the end. They have not stopped to consider just what would be the character of our campaign in "critically supporting" the SP.

In general, the proper conduct of such a campaign demands 90 percent criticism -- 10 percent support. In this way the party prepares the workers at whom the maneuver is directed to draw the full lessons of the experience through which we intend to pass together with them.

What does this mean in the given case? Hitherto we have devoted a minimum of space to the SP, and correctly so. No one has criticized our press for this. Undertaking the proposed campaign would mean suddenly devoting for the duration of the campaign considerable space to a criticism of the SP. We would have to say what is; namely, that the SP is neither "socialist" nor a party; that its position on all basic questions, especially on the war, is deceitful and treacherous through and through. We would have to show that the SP is least to be identified with a movement for an independent labor party (we would have to expose all the machinations and crimes of the Thomasites in Michigan in connection with the MCF), etc. etc.

If all this were addressed to workers who cherished illusions about the SP, it would make sense. But to address this to workers who are completely indifferent to the SP to begin with, is to put ourselves in a position that borders on the ridiculous. In politics what is funny is fatal.

What then can the consequences of such a campaign be? At best, confusion. Instead of dissipating illusions we would be instrumental in reinforcing and sowing them. Instead of going through a fruitful experience with the workers, we will ask them to undergo a futile experience with us.

What will the party learn from this? How will this further the tasks we are now engaged in? How does this fit in with our past experience and present orientation? To these and many other questions that arise the proponents have no answer at all. They never even thought of them.

In the existing conditions, the fact remains that we cannot place our own candidate on the ballot; we cannot support any of the candidates now on the ballot. But we still can utilize the elections in order to further our work and our tasks. The Political Committee in its letter of September 6, proposes the following:

"(1) That we utilize the national election campaign to put forth our labor party position.

"(2) That we reject the proposal to give critical support to the SP in the election campaign.

"(a) We would be justified in giving critical support to the SP if the SP were a mass organization with roots in the labor movement and could serve to break masses of workers away from the capitalist parties. The contrary is the case.

"(b) We would be justified in giving critical support to the SP if, despite its present size and isolation, its position on the fundamental questions of the day facilitated our programmatic agitation. This is not the case, however. On the crucial question of the attitude towards imperialist war its position is diametrically opposed to ours.

"In the only place where the Socialist Party represents a force -- in Reading -- our comrades are giving critical support to the local candidates of the Socialist Party. They are utilizing the campaign to project the program of our own party and to advocate the building of a labor party based on the trade unions."

No serious arguments have been advanced why we cannot achieve what is proposed by the Political Committee.

To be sure, an attempt has been made to use the peculiar Reading situation as an argument for a national policy. Such an approach is superficial and false. The exceptional conditions existing in Reading do not obtain nationally.

In Reading we actually find that the "Socialist" label is a cover for what in essence is a local movement for an independent labor party; there the trade unions support the local ticket; there the basis exists for our going through a local experience with the bulk of the workers. To repeat, it is impermissible to construct a national policy on the basis of an isolated situation.

In his book, The History of American Trotskyism Comrade Cannon relates an experience of the early Communist movement that can be fruitful to us. In the 1920 presidential elections, the CP did not have a candidate of its own, and in seeking to "do something" in the situation arrived at the notion of a boycott. Commenting on this artificial action Comrade Cannon writes: "You might think that we (the Communist Party) could have just said, 'We have no candidate; we can't do anything about it.' That was the case, for example, with the Socialist Workers' Party -- the Trotskyists in 1940; because of technical, financial and organizational difficulties, we weren't able to get on the ballot. We didn't find it possible to support any of the candidates so we just let the matter pass."

In 1944, we find ourselves unfortunately much in the same position as in 1940. "We can't do anything about it." We'll have no difficulty in making our position clear to the workers. On the other hand, artificial expedients such as the proposal to support the SP can only hamper us.

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LETTER FROM CANNON

June 21, 1944

Now I must write about the pardon application. We had a disagreement on procedure.

I proposed that we say nothing in the application except that we ask for unconditional pardon on the ground of constitutional rights, adding only this: "In presenting my application for unconditional pardon on the above grounds I wish to make it clear that I have not changed any of the views for which I have been imprisoned, as expressed by me and other defendants at our trial." Goldman proposed to include a statement of views in the pardon application with the object of publishing it in leaflet form, and submitted a draft. I disagreed with the draft, but since we opposed any statement, that question (the draft) was not discussed. My motion carried 9 to 5. For my motion: Cannon, Dunne, Dobbs, Coover, Skoglund, DeBoer, Geldman, Palmquist, Hansen. For the G. motion: Goldman, Morrow, Hudson, Cooper, Hamel. A second motion by me was then carried to the effect that each individual may put any statement he wishes on his own application, and that the other defendants in the case be notified of our decision.

In my opinion the issue is not important enough to debate at any great length. I will state my views briefly:

1. The campaign around the pardon demand is going along very well, is being conducted properly on the correct line of policy which makes the broadest appeal, and is meeting with gratifying successes.
2. I view the signing of the pardon application as a mere formality, nothing more, which we go through only because it is mandatory under the rules in order for our friends to secure a hearing on the case. Otherwise, I would consider it best for us to sign nothing and say nothing while the campaign is in progress.
3. There is no need for us to intrude in the campaign with another statement of views. Our position has been made clear enough in the trial pamphlets and the pamphlet of farewell speeches. Silence now on our part while our friends conduct our campaign is a way of speaking that is most effective under the circumstances. Everybody knows we are in prison for our views. Every resolution adopted by trade unions in our behalf stresses this fact. So does every comment on the case in the labor press which I have seen. We reaffirmed these views quite emphatically in our farewell speeches, and nobody has accused us of changing them since our departure. Another statement from us is not called for at the present time; would not add anything to what is already known, and, consequently, could not attract very much attention; would not broaden the pardon campaign or help it in any way, and might possibly injure it.
4. The important thing now is not what we say but what others say and do in our behalf. Attention should be centered on this. The fact that we have gone through the formality of signing the pardon application should not even be mentioned in the press.

The petitions presented in the names of the others are what counts. At the time of the formal presentation of these petitions to the president all publicity should be devoted to the new and essentially important fact that trade unions representing $1\frac{1}{2}$ million workers and many prominent individuals have formally demanded our liberation. Tactically, this is the most effective way to proceed. It is out of the question even to speak of any principle being involved in this difference of approach to the specific problem of the moment.

LETTER FROM GOLDMAN

The petition for a pardon must be filed soon and it is therefore necessary to decide what we should insert in it. It is necessary, first of all, to decide the principle whether the petition should contain a statement of our beliefs and an allegation that our conviction is a violation of the Constitutional guarantees, or whether it should confine itself to the latter assertions. If the decision is to confine the petition to the Constitutional question, then we need not bother discussing the ideas for which we stand and which we should include in the petition. If the decision is the other way, then we can take up the different ideas to be included. I have drawn up a draft of a petition, but it should not be discussed until the first question is decided. I favor the idea of a political petition, that is, including our ideas. My draft is based on that idea, but it is only a draft. It can be modified by additions, eliminations and alterations. But it should not be discussed until the first question is settled. I want the opinion of the comrades on this question, especially of the Political Committee.

My proposal is to recapitulate the ideas which we presented during the trial, with the aim of informing the Pardon Board, the President and, above all, the people whose support we are seeking, of the nature of the ideas for which we were convicted. At the same time we should also raise the Constitutional question. In the ordinary case a pardon is requested on the ground of the defendant's innocence. We, too, insist that we are innocent of the charges levelled against us. But our case involves ideas. It is essential that we present them, as we did during the trial. The petition should not be considered merely as a legal document, but as a continuation of the trial. When one considers that we are appealing not only to the Pardon Board and the President, but also to the people of the country to support our petition, it should be clear that it is doubly necessary to indicate our beliefs. Let everybody know what we stand for. What we say from prison, especially if it be presented briefly and clearly, will not go unread. Should we confine ourselves to a mere statement of our Constitutional rights, the inference can be made that we are asking for a pardon regardless of what we believe and advocate. Our case is tremendously strengthened if we come with a statement of our beliefs and ideas. It is perfectly proper for an outside organization like

the CRDC to present its petition based solely on Constitutional grounds, but not for political defendants.

I am not at all surprised that Baldwin should favor a petition based on Constitutional grounds only. His politics are such that we could not expect him to favor my proposal. But in this matter Baldwin is hardly to be considered an authority for us.

The above constitute my basic reasons for favoring a political petition. There are others that I cannot get into.

1. I ask the Executive Branch of the Government of the United States to free me and 17 others who are innocent of any crime, and in so freeing us to uphold the right of free speech and of free press guaranteed by the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States.

2. The charges against me involved my economic, social and political ideas. I was convicted because of those ideas which I hold in common with other members of the Socialist Workers Party. So that there be no question as to the nature of these ideas, which I presented during the trial and which I believe in at present, I shall herein briefly restate them.

3. I believe that the major ills of society--such as war, fascism, unemployment and mass poverty--are due to the ownership of the productive wealth of society by a small group of people. I designate these owners as capitalists.

4. I advocate the idea that the means of production should be owned by the people, and that goods should be produced for the use of the people instead of for the profit of the capitalists.

5. I believe that there are two basic classes in our society--(1) the capitalists who own but do not produce; and (2) the workers who produce but do not own. A government which defends the capitalist system is a capitalist government. Our present government is such a government.

7. I believe in honest, militant and democratic trade unions to defend the rights of the workers. I urge workers to defend themselves against violence from fascist or other anti-union elements.

8. I believe in full political, economic and social equality of the Negro people.

9. I do not advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence. I believe that a majority of the people will have to be educated to accept and support our ideas before a socialist government can be established. On the basis of a study of history and of contemporary social forces, I predict

that the capitalist minority will refuse to surrender its wealth, power and privileges to representatives of the majority of the people, and will have recourse to violence. I hope that the fundamental social change or revolution which I advocate will be accomplished peacefully. I shall do everything possible to bring about a peaceful change. Understanding, however, that the capitalist minority will, in all probability, offer violent resistance to the majority of the people, I shall advise the workers to be prepared to meet such violence.

10. I do not support any of the capitalist countries in this war because I do not believe that they are fighting for democracy against fascism. Although opposed to the Stalinist dictatorship, I support the Soviet Union because the Government of Workers and Peasants, after the revolution of November 1917, took the industries and land away from the capitalists and landlords, and nationalized property still exists in the Soviet Union. All the capitalist governments, however, are merely waging an imperialist war, caused by the struggle between German capitalism on the one hand and American-British capitalism on the other, for the control of sources of raw material, markets and spheres of influence. Any charge that I want the defeat of this country by Hitler is an outrageous slander. I do not believe in creating insubordination in the armed forces. I believe that so long as the government is supported by a majority of the people, or tolerated by it, the minority is under an obligation to submit and demand the right to spread its ideas in order to gain a majority.

11. I advocate democracy within the armed forces and military training under trade union control. I deny that this constitutes advocating insubordination in the armed forces.

12. I believe that under the first amendment to the Constitution, I and the Socialist Workers Party have the right to educate people to accept the above views. The conviction and imprisonment of the 18 defendants in the Minneapolis case is a gross violation of the rights granted to the people by the Constitution. I ask that you uphold the principles of democracy and the Constitution by granting me and all other defendants an unconditional pardon.

We held a meeting at which I presented the following motion: to include in the petition for pardon a concise statement of what we believe and advocate, on the lines that we followed during the trial. Cannon presented a motion to the effect that the petition should confine itself to Constitutional grounds plus a one-sentence statement that we have not changed our views. Morrow, Hudson, Cooper and Hanel voted with me for my motion--the nine others voted for the Cannon motion. Then Cannon moved to permit anyone to include a statement of beliefs. This was passed. I had drawn up a draft of a statement which I thought should be included in the petition, but it was not discussed since the decision was against including any statement

of political views. It goes without saying that the draft could have been changed by additions, eliminations or modifications. In fact, at the suggestion of others, it has already been modified. Any suggestion from the Political Committee or anybody else will be given serious consideration.

I must admit that I was and still am astounded at the fact that an objection should be raised to my proposal to include a statement of political beliefs in the pardon petition. I took it for granted that we would carry on the precedent set by us at the beginning of the presentation and since continued. Another opportunity is at hand to state our views--this time in a very concise manner and under the very dramatic circumstances of having voices speak from behind prison bars. Another opportunity to publish our views--this time in tens of thousands of leaflets and expressed collectively. Only the weightiest and most serious reasons should make us shift from the course we adopted when the prosecution was first started.

Let us see if there is a single serious objection to my proposal.

Objection 1: We have already presented our views in pamphlets.

Answer: But is there any harm in repeating them? Effective propaganda consists in the constant repetition of an idea, differently expressed and applying it to different circumstances. One must be blind not to see a special opportunity for us under the present circumstances. I deny, however, that a statement containing ten points or so of our fundamental beliefs is a mere repetition. We have pamphlets, large and small, which have been sold by the thousands. Have we, however, any very short document which our members or friends can present to someone whom they want to interest in the case--a document which will take little time to read and which presents the fundamentals of our beliefs? I do not know of any. A leaflet containing twelve points can be distributed by the tens of thousands, and for every one that will take the time and trouble to read any of our pamphlets, there will be at least ten who will read a leaflet. And again I mention the important psychological fact that it is a statement of those behind bars. Tens of thousands of leaflets can and should be distributed after the refusal to grant us a pardon.

Objection 2: The campaign for our pardon is going along very well through the CRDC, which is conducting a campaign on the basis that we are in jail for our views.

Answer: What has that to do with the proposal? From the very beginning it was understood that the CRDC conduct our defense on constitutional grounds, and that we, through the party, stress the nature of our ideas, in addition to the constitutional grounds. The CRDC says that we are in jail for our

views, and it is obligatory for us to tell the people what those views are and to try to gain sympathy for them. Should we be satisfied if a petition is presented by the CRDC to five or ten thousand people? Why should we not print at least fifty thousand leaflets telling people the fundamentals of our program? The CRDC cannot propagate our views. "Everybody knows that we are in prison for our views"--say the objectors to my proposal. I hope so. But even if that were true it is necessary to tell everybody what those views are.

Objection 3: The trade unions representing $1\frac{1}{2}$ million workers have gone on record for our pardon, as have many prominent individuals. Hence it is more important to publicize this fact.

Answer: Why counterpose one proposal as against the other? Can we not do both things? The objections to my proposal seem to be based entirely on this false method: Something has already been done or is being done; hence there is no need to do anything else. We presented our views in pamphlets; hence no need to publish leaflets. We have the CRDC conducting a good campaign; hence no need for the party to intrude. If trade unions representing $1\frac{1}{2}$ million workers have gone on record for our pardon, does that obviate the necessity and duty of telling 50 thousand or more individual trade unionists what we stand for?

Objection 4: We must view the signing of the pardon petition as a mere formality and not even mention it in the press.

Answer: That is the whole trouble, and the whole weakness of the objection is brought out very sharply by the astounding (to say the least) proposal that we not even mention the fact that we file a pardon petition in the press. Even the rather unimportant filing of certain legal documents have been prominently featured in our press. But when the prisoners themselves, while in prison, sign a pardon petition and present it to the President, the press is asked to be silent. My reaction is one of shocked amazement. One can easily see that the proposal to give no publicity to the pardon petition flows from the fact that no statement of beliefs is included. Then there is nothing worth publishing. My proposal, on the other hand, is for our press to play up the petition, that an effort be made to get it into all other newspapers, and then to publish it in tens of thousands of leaflets. He who says that this will interfere with the pardon campaign must prove it by something other than the mere claim that such will be the case. He must show that those who are supporting us do not know what we stand for and will withdraw their support if they find out through the publication of the pardon petition. The only correct method of approaching the pardon petition is to consider it as a continuation of the trial and the general defense. There is no principle involved in this question, says Cannon. Correct! But it is also correct to state that political people must take advantage of every opportunity to present their views. And this can be designated as a principle. I

must add that personally it would have caused me mental anguish to sign a petition which does not include a statement of my beliefs. Fortunately, this has been obviated by permitting those who want to do so to include a statement of political beliefs. Looking at the case as an important historical event, I must say that only the most serious considerations would lead me to sign a petition without a statement. The more important question, however, remains--to take advantage of a most dramatic opportunity to present our views.

July 11, 1944

I hope you have quoted Stein exactly when you write that he told you that a leaflet containing the statement of beliefs would be too restricted and it is better to elaborate on our ideas in the press and pamphlets. How in the world will the distribution of 100,000 leaflets containing the statement of political beliefs interfere with the sale of pamphlets or of the press presenting a more elaborate explanation of our views. In our propaganda we are always under the necessity of condensing our ideas in the expectation that people whom we reach will read our more elaborate explanations. A short summary of a book may constitute the best advertising for the book.

For anyone justifiably to oppose the publication and distribution of a large number of leaflets, on the basis of Stein's argument, he must contend that the contents of the leaflet would cause the reader to lose all interest in any further explanation. Or that the leaflet will give the reader an absolutely wrong idea of what we stand for. I am, of course, still open to suggestions for changes. But I contend that the petition, as is, is a correct and concise formulation of what we presented at the trial. The very least that a person, interested in utilizing this opportunity to spread our ideas, can say of my proposal is that it should be tried because it can do no harm. I must admit, however, that I would think very little of such a person's imaginative faculty. The fact is that the distribution of tens of thousands of leaflets containing the political statement of beliefs would be, by far, the best and most effective piece of propaganda in connection with the case.

August 6, 1944

You write me that as an argument against publishing leaflets containing a statement of political beliefs as included in the petition Stein advanced the following: "that leaflets like these and trial pamphlets would begin to shape party policy and not the other way around." I hope you have quoted him accurately, because if there is anything I hate it is to get into a discussion on the basis of a statement the accuracy of which is challenged.

Stein, by the way, was one of those who were quite enthusiastic when, prior to leaving New York, I proposed the idea of drawing up a statement of political beliefs for a pardon petition and printing the statement in thousands of leaflets for free distribution. I am assuming that the argument you quote above presented itself to him, or that it was advanced by someone and he changed his mind.

Accepting the accuracy of the statement, it must mean either (1) that there is no party policy about the subject matter of the proposed leaflet and consequently we should not issue leaflets until party policy is established, or (2) that the line followed in the petition is contrary to party policy.

No one, as far as I know, has questioned the proposition that the line followed in the petition is exactly the line followed during the trial. That line is party policy. It is true that no party convention was held formally adopting it as party policy. But when we take into consideration that some objections were raised and answered in a pamphlet authorized by the Political Committee and that the trial pamphlets were published and sold, with no objection from anyone, can there be any doubt that the line followed during the trial is party policy? And since the political line of the petition is the same, how can any argument be raised involving the question of party policy?

If the proposition advanced by Stein means that we should not attempt to state our general ideas in summary form, then all I can say is that our general ideas must be so abstract that they can have no meaning for the average mortal. If we cannot present our main ideas in 500 words, then we can do so in 1,000 words. But it is absurd to contend for a proposition which leads to the inference that we must not attempt to summarize our ideas. Every election platform dealing with the war question must of necessity be a summary of our ideas. We must learn, if we want to be effective, to condense our ideas into the shortest and simplest form. And, if necessary, we can always refer the reader to more exhaustive works on the subject.

Can pamphlets and leaflets determine policy? No! Because pamphlets and leaflets are necessarily written, in our party at least, on the basis of policy. Pamphlets and leaflets are written either in accordance with or contrary to party policy. They should be written and published only if they are in accord with party policy.

The question of party policy can be raised in connection with the proposed leaflet only if one believes that the line followed at the trial was wrong and must be changed, or that it was right only up to the time of the petition, and it is now necessary to change it.

If the opposition to my proposal would advance either one of the above arguments I would fiercely oppose their

contention, but I would recognize its logical character. But when practical objections are raised, such as interfering with the pardon campaign of the CRDC or, as with Stein, an objection is raised that merely hints at the question of the correctness of the line, one is tempted to ask whether the objectors have attempted to think their objections through to the end, or whether they do not want to come out with the flat proposition that the line we are following is wrong.

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Petition for Pardon submitted by:

Jako Cooper
Albert Goldman
Clarence Hamel
Carlos Hudson

Karl Kuehn
Felix Morrow
Alfred Russel
Oscar Shoenfeld

Petitioner states that the facts in his case are as follows:

1. I am one of the eighteen defendants convicted in the Federal District Court at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in December, 1941, on the charge of conspiracy to advocate the violent overthrow of the government and to cause insubordination in the armed forces.
2. Most of the defendants were leaders of Local 544 which was part of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters of the A. F. of L. up to June 9, 1941, when the membership, by an overwhelming majority, voted to join the C.I.O. The leadership of the Local had been in opposition to Daniel Tobin, president of the International.
3. After Local 544 voted to affiliate with the C.I.O., the newspapers of the country carried an item to the effect that on June 13, Daniel Tobin had complained by telegram to President Roosevelt, charging the leaders of Local 544 with being "subversive." The report further stated that the President had condemned the C.I.O. for chartering Local 544, and that he had referred the matter to the Department of Justice. Soon after came the indictment against us.
4. Among those indicted were not only the leaders of 544 but also some of the national leaders of the Socialist Workers Party. The indictment charged all the defendants with being members of that party.
5. The indictment contained two counts: the first charging a conspiracy to overthrow the government by force and violence; the second charging a conspiracy to advocate the overthrow of the government by violence and to cause

insubordination in the armed forces. Twenty-eight defendants were tried. Ten were acquitted of both counts; all of the defendants were acquitted on the first count; eighteen were found guilty on the second count. Twelve were given sentences of sixteen months and six were sentenced to a year and a day.

6. The law under which I and the other defendants were indicted -- generally known as the "Smith anti-sedition law" -- was passed in June, 1940, and ours was the first case under this statute.

* * * * *

Petitioner respectfully prays that he be granted a pardon for the following reasons:

1. I ask for the pardon of eighteen people who are innocent of any crime; I ask that you pardon us and thus uphold the right of free speech and free press guaranteed to the people of the United States by the Bill of Rights.

2. The charges against me involved my economic, social and political ideas, which I hold in common with those who are members of the Socialist Workers Party. I was convicted for these ideas and so that there be no question as to their nature I shall herein briefly summarize them:

3. I believe that the major ills of society -- such as war, fascism, unemployment and mass poverty -- are due to the ownership of the productive wealth of society by a small group of people. I designate these owners as capitalists.

4. I advocate the idea that the means of production should be owned by the people and that good should be produced for the use of the people instead of for the profit of the capitalists.

5. I believe that there are two basic classes in our society: (1) the capitalists who own but do not produce; and (2) the workers who produce but do not own. A government which defends this system is a capitalist government.

6. I advocate that the workers and farmers organize politically and economically to acquire control of the government, take over all the main industries and institute a system of production of use instead of for profit.

7. I believe in honest, militant and democratic trade unions to defend the rights of the workers. I urge workers to organize for defense against any attack from fascist or other anti-union elements.

8. I believe in full political, economic and social equality for the Negro people.

9. I do not advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence. I believe that a majority of the people will have to be educated to accept and support the ideas of socialism before a socialist government can be established. I predict that the capitalist class will refuse to surrender its wealth, power and prestige to representatives of the majority of the people and that the capitalist class will have recourse to violence. I shall do everything possible to bring about a peaceful revolution or fundamental social change. Understanding, however, that the capitalist minority will, in all probability, offer violent resistance to the majority, I shall advise the workers and farmers to be prepared to meet such violence.

10. I do not support any of the capitalist countries in this war because I do not believe that they are fighting for democracy against fascism. Although opposed to the Stalinist dictatorship, I support the Soviet Union because the government of workers and peasants, after the revolution of November 1917, took the industries and land away from the capitalists and landlords, and nationalized property still exists in the Soviet Union.

All the capitalist governments, however, are merely waging an imperialist war, caused by the struggle between German capitalism on the one hand and American-British capitalism on the other, for the control of sources of raw material, markets and spheres of influence. Any charge that I want the defeat of this country by Hitler is an outrageous slander.

11. I advocate democracy in the armed forces, and military training under trade-union control. I deny that this constitutes advocating insubordination in the armed forces.

12. I believe that under the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States, I and the Socialist Workers Party have the right to educate the people in the above views. Congress has violated the right of free speech and free press by enacting the Smith law under which we were indicted and convicted.

The Attorney General's office has violated the right of free speech and free press by initiating the prosecution against the defendants.

The Judiciary has failed to guard the rights of free speech and free press by upholding the conviction.

It is now up to you, Mr. President, to pardon me and the other defendants and thus uphold the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States.

End

Petition for Pardon submitted by:

James P. Cannon
Graco Carlson
Oscar Coover
Harry DeBoer
Farrell Dobbs

V. R. Dunno
Max Goldman
Emil Hansen
Edward Palmquist
Carl Skoglund

My imprisonment is a violation of my constitutional rights.

In asking for an unconditional pardon on these grounds I wish to make it clear that I have not changed any of the views for which I was imprisoned, as stated by me and other defendants at the trial.

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LETTER FROM M. MORRISON

Reply to Comrade Margaret Stewart

September 7, 1944

From a summary of Comrade Stewart's reply to Morrison on the question of the censure of the four comrades who participated in a discussion with members of the W.P., I take it that she stands for the following proposition: that a member of our party can feel absolutely free to talk to any member of any other party, including the W.P., and discuss all subjects. With this qualification, that in discussing a subject on which the party has taken a position, a member of our party is obligated to defend the party position.

On the basis of this proposition I consider that Morrison's objective in writing his letter to the membership has been achieved to the extent of ninety percent. While the other ten percent deserves discussion, it can wait for another opportunity.

I am of the opinion that Comrade Stewart does not interpret the decision of the commission correctly, but I shall not quarrel with her on this score. It might possibly be that my version of the commission's decision is not exact. If the membership has the same attitude as Comrade Stewart, I shall be satisfied. If those who organized the membership meeting also adopt Comrade Stewart's formula I shall be more than satisfied.

A word on the question of democratic centralism. I interpreted the decision of the commission to mean that no party member can discuss questions with members of an opponent organization without permission of the party -- period --. On that basis the question of democratic centralism is completely irrelevant. It has relevancy to a certain extent on the basis of the interpretation given the decision by Comrade Stewart. If one says that a party member cannot discuss with an opponent then he establishes a rule which has nothing to do with democratic centralism. But if one says that he may discuss but must defend party policy then democratic centralism is involved insofar as its meaning is extended to include the idea of discipline.

Naturally I accept the principle that the party must present a united front to the outside world on all questions which have been adopted as party policy by the majority. There are certain aspects of this general principle that require discussion, but this is not necessary now. Comrade Stewart seems to think that a kitchen-sink discussion between four of our party members and some W.P. members comes under that principle. (By the way, one of the four defended the party policy so that, according to Margaret's proposition he should not have been censured). It seems a little absurd to include such a discussion under the heading of presenting a united front to the public. But we shall let that pass.

Comrade Stewart does not seem to realize that her interpretation of the decision of the commission plus her inclusion of the discussion of the four members under the heading of a solid front to the public places the members of our highest body in a somewhat ridiculous light.

One would imagine that in these days when so many serious political problems confront the party, the members of the highest body of the party would not concern themselves with an incident where four members of our party had a discussion with some members of another party -- one of these four members defending the party position and the other three listening. This kind of an incident should hardly be taken up by a branch executive committee. A little fatherly advice from a branch organizer should suffice. But our highest body appoints a commission and calls a New York membership meeting on this question.

If you say, Comrade Stewart, that your interpretation of the commission's decision is correct, you must induce the highest body to refrain from treating such trivialities.

But to repeat -- ninety percent of Morrison's objective has been achieved as far as Comrade Stewart is concerned and there can be no quarrel with her.

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REPLY TO MCRRIS STEIN FROM M. MORRISON

September 10, 1944 .

In spite of the sound and fury of Comrade Stein's reply to Morrison, we have reached a point in the discussion where we are able to say whether there is a real issue to argue about, and if there is, what its nature is. When confronted with a difference of opinion and a discussion, an intelligent individual tries to get at the heart of the question and to formulate the issues, if the protagonists have not taken the trouble to formulate them for the reader.

In her reply to Morrison, Comrade Stewart told us what she thinks the issue is. In effect she took the position that party members are free to discuss with opponents but are bound to defend the party position. With some explanation to be undertaken in the future, I accept that proposition.

Comrade Stein, in his reply to Morrison, seems to stand for the following proposition: that organized discussion for the purpose of doing work in an opponent party can be initiated only with the approval of the party. I have no hesitation in accepting this proposition unqualifiedly. Since neither of the above propositions contradicts my position that party members should feel free to discuss questions with opponents -- they only qualify and extend my position -- there is obviously no basis for argument. We all stand for the same thing.

It must be, therefore, that the whole controversy is either the result of a misunderstanding or, someone has modified his position in the course of the argument. Generally it can serve no purpose to continue an argument once agreement is reached and we find that there are no issues. In this case, however, because of the sound and fury of Comrade Stein's article, it is necessary to discuss the question why the controversy arose. A discussion of that section of Stein's article which is only froth and foam will be valuable also in teaching

some people how not to think.

To save space and time I shall take up only a few of the many propositions laid down by Comrade Stein in the sound-and-fury section of his reply.

(1) Morrison is somehow or other guilty of conciliationism. Answer: Some people feel the necessity of calling opponents names and refusing to talk to them, in order to assure themselves and all others of their intransigence in principle. Others, like myself, do not feel that necessity. To show how really intransigent they are, the members of the first group generally call those of the second group conciliationists. If, to stand for the proposition that a member of our party must be too confident of the correctness of our ideas to refuse to discuss our position with anybody and everybody, constitutes conciliationism, then I presume I have to plead guilty. I have done exactly this in all my years in the revolutionary movement, and I intend to continue doing so. It will take a specific order from the party to prevent me from discussing and defending my position with anybody and everybody in the labor movement.

(2) "Our hostility to the W.P.," says Comrade Stein, "is far more basic, far more profound," than the harm their members did by splitting the party, as indicated by Morrison. "It flows from the programmatic gulf dividing them from us". . . We can have nothing "but hostility and contempt. . . for a group of petty-bourgeois revisionists and renegades from Marxism." To this I answer simply that if leading Stalinists wanted to discuss with me I would discuss with them and my hatred for their program would not prevent me. It remains a fact that the W.P. program is closer to ours than the program of any other group.

From the point of view of program I should feel friendlier to them than to the Socialist Party members. But I don't, because they did far more harm to the party. Comrade Stein forgets that he, together with all of us, including the Old Man, was perfectly willing to have the minority remain in the party, even though they believed in the same ideas, with reference to the Soviet Union, that they stand for at present. We did not ask them to change their beliefs; we only insisted that they abide by the majority decision to defend the Soviet Union. If it is their program that makes them renegades from Marxism, Stein should explain how it is that we were willing to have renegades from Marxism in our party. They could say anything they wanted about the Soviet Union in our own ranks; they could urge the party not to defend the Soviet Union. We said that they gave up the Marxist concept of the state and many other things, but we did not say they were renegades, that is, that they turned against the idea of proletarian revolution. It is necessary for a Marxist to use absolutely exact terms.

(3) "Is he perhaps referring to individuals and not to the party as such when he (Morrison) speaks of the proud and emancipating spirit" (of Bolshevism), asks Stein. Bolshevism, my dear Comrade Stein, is not something that exists in air. It is a program which contains a certain spirit. The party as such must have that program and that spirit and every member should have it. Every member should have confidence enough in his program (and to have confidence he must

know and understand it) to meet everyone in argument. And if the party thinks that certain members do not have that knowledge and therefore lack the ability and confidence to defend the program it should teach them the program and inspire them with confidence. To you that is petty-bourgeois anarchism, Comrade Stein? I can only feel sorry for you.

(4) Comrade Stein would have the members believe that, by characterizing as Stalinist, a policy which would prohibit our members from discussing with opponents, Morrison accuses members of the P.C. with being Stalinists. In the rather slim hope of stopping the use of such an argument in the future I shall attempt an essentially unnecessary explanation.

Certain ideas and certain practices are peculiar and unique to Stalinism. One of the practices is to forbid members of the Stalinist party to have personal relationships with Trotskyists. I have no copy of my letter, and it is possible that I formulated my statement with reference to Stalinism so that it is subject to misinterpretation. But my general meaning is quite clear, I am certain. On the assumption that the decision of the commission was meant to prevent our members from discussing with W.P. members, I must have said that this comes close to the Stalinist idea of prohibiting personal relationships. When one says that a certain practice or idea is Stalinist, one does not mean that the person who has that idea or advocates that practice is a Stalinist. For my part I shall not hesitate to call every germ of Stalinism, entering our ranks, by just that name. It is the best method of destroying such a germ.

(5) The prize for something or other goes to the section of Stein's answer which brings in that part of the constitution of the party prohibiting political collaboration with non-members unless formally authorized by the party. Without knowing everything the commission said or did, I shall assume the risk of stating that neither the charges nor the decision was based on this constitutional provision. We have here the really interesting and unique situation where charges are filed and a decision rendered and afterwards an attempt is made to find a constitutional provision to justify the decision.

But that is the least significant aspect of this point. I do not have the constitution before me but I feel certain that the provision quoted undoubtedly refers to actions involving the united front or something similar. It could not possibly apply to a situation where comrades agree to discuss questions with opponents. Furthermore, to bring the discussion with W.P. people under this provision, Stein invents a new and very startling category -- "objective political collaboration." He feels a little weak on the proposition that the four comrades were guilty of organizing opponents' work and he takes refuge in the grotesque conception of objective political collaboration.

Political collaboration must necessarily involve an intentional working together with an opponent group to achieve a certain objective. Unintentional or objective political collaboration is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms. After torturing the term political collaboration to include "objective collaboration," Stein

goes a little further and designates a meeting of four comrades to discuss with W.P. members (where one of the comrades undertakes to defend our position) as political collaboration, which consists in finding a common basis of agreement for the purpose of acting together. Is it not charitable if we say that the discovery of political collaboration in this incident is due to a mental lapse?

It now becomes necessary to explain why this sound and fury? The charges, the meeting, the decision served the purpose of creating an atmosphere where party members would feel that it is wrong to discuss with W.P. members. My guess is that some of those responsible for the membership meeting understood the purpose, while the rest were not aware of it. That there are P.C. members who want to instill that fear into our membership is quite obvious to me. In this connection one must remember that, last year, a P.C. member, reporting to the New York membership on his stay in Los Angeles, gloated over the fact that he was instrumental in destroying "fraternization" with W.P. members. I was not present at the meeting, but all reports of it indicate to me that in the term "fraternization" was included discussion, even when defending party policy.

When, after the New York membership meeting, the question was raised sharply as to the right of members to feel free to discuss with opponents, it was no longer easy to get away with generalities about democratic centralism and discipline. It was necessary to answer the concrete question: have the members a right to discuss with W.P. members? Comrade Stewart replied to Morrison and gave her formulation and let it go at that. But Stein cannot be so simple and honest. A retreat had to be executed, but in retreating it was necessary to create a smoke screen of sound and fury.

However, in getting out from one dilemma, Stein succeeds in involving himself in another. The fact remains that never before in the history of the Bolshevik movement has the highest body of a party treated so seriously a meeting of four members with opponents for discussion purposes, where one of the members defended our position. Give this incident the worst possible interpretation and you still have justification, at the very most, of the intervention of a branch executive committee. If one assumes that the organizers of the membership meeting had as their purpose to instill into the membership the idea that discussion with W.P. people is out of order, then the whole incident has sense. Any other assumption means that we must say, at the very least, that those who organized the meeting are lacking completely in a sense of political proportion.

To cover up their dilemma the sound and fury of Stein appears to be the best means. My prediction is that this sound and fury will continue. In that sense the outcome of the incident is bad. But in the sense that now we all know where we stand the result is not at all bad. It can now be taken as understood that (1) members can feel free to discuss any and all political questions with opponents, including W.P. members; (2) they must defend the party position; (3) they must not undertake the organization of work in an opponent party without the authorization and approval of the proper party body. If we all agree on this, then serious members of the party will frown on any continuation of sound and fury.

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ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

By Lydia Bennett

A few recent circumstances have thrown into prominence a discussion of the principle of democratic centralism. Regardless of one's views on the subject, everyone must agree that the composition, role and functioning of the leading body of the party is of the essence of the question. Even those who in my opinion are mistaken in their interpretation of the principle of democratic centralism make it clear in their arguments that the functioning of the National Committee lies at the crux of the problem.

It is impossible to conceive of a systematically operating organization without some kind of diversified functioning and responsibility among its members. Usually this necessity manifests itself in a primary division between "leadership" and "ranks." The basis of selecting the personnel of the leadership differs with different kinds of organizations: dominance by force, election by democratic processes, educational qualifications, social position, wealth, divine appointment, etc. In a bolshevik organization the selection takes place by means of the democratic process, given form and meaning through the application of certain principles which are acknowledged as important in making a selection of leaders. These principles necessarily flow from the party conception of the purposes not only of the leading body but of the party itself.

I consider the following the most important functions to be performed by the leading body of a party like ours. They probably are not all but in my opinion if these mentioned here are not realized the committee may be judged to have failed in the performance of its duties.

1) To collectivize the leadership of the party. The vital core of bolshevik organizational strength rests in the conception that the party and its policies are a crystallization of the living experience of innumerable members of the politically alert proletariat. The sole assurance of the probable correctness of bolshevik policy is to be found in the fact that, out of the vastly diversified experiences of the working class, summarized and formulated by individuals grounded in revolutionary theory, a useful generalization or abstraction is extracted to enrich this body of theory. It is anomalous to think of a bolshevik party with a leadership limited to one or a few individuals.

2) To cultivate new leaders. This involves the conscious selection of promising individuals from among the ranks for election to the leading body and a close attention to their development as leaders. They must be given the responsibility of arriving at political estimates on important matters, whether they come to the right conclusion in their first efforts or not; they can learn only by doing.

3) To be alert to political events as they arise and to deliberate upon the interpretation of important occurrences and formulate policy not only for the edification of the Committee members alone but for the intellectual benefit of the entire party.

4) To act as the interpreter of party policy directly to the ranks of the party and to serve as the intimate leader of party work in the branches. This can be done either through the presence of members of the Committee in the branches or in a steady correspondence on political matters between the Committee and the membership.

5) To organize and systematize the presentation of important political ideas and tasks to the party ranks and to assist directly in effecting their application to the problems of organization facing the party.

It is my impression that a great deal of confusion exists in the party as to the desired composition not only of the National Committee but of local committees as well. This flows I believe from an inaccurate conception of what the party really is.

A bolshevik party is normally made up of diverse elements, any one of which can be either a detriment or a benefit to the party depending upon its relationship to the others. There are some members whose primary preoccupation is in the labor movement (trade unions, mass racial organizations, cooperative movements, organizations of the unemployed when they exist, etc.); some whose main interest lies in the elaboration of party theory and in the public dissemination of the ideas of the movement through the press or from the platform; some who find their best expression in the purely administrative aspects of party functioning; and probably a large number of others whose various dominant interests need not be mentioned here. This diversity constitutes precisely one of the greatest virtues of the party; and one of the most important functions of the leading body is to maintain as nearly a perfect balance among them as possible so that a maximum contribution can be elicited from each. The realization of such a task obviously requires representation upon the leading committees from all of the most important of these groups (their relative importance is by no means fixed).

Not only in the field of interest but also in the sphere of interpretation and application of party principle and policy is there room for diverse conceptions in a bolshevik party, provided of course that they remain within certain generally accepted limits. Tendencies within the party based upon these divergences must also be represented in the leading body.

My contention may here be summarized as follows: the leading committee of the party must be made up of members who represent not one general line of political approach only; nor should it be made up solely of members whose interest or work lies in one single field of party functioning. A "monolithic" committee should in my opinion pass only two motions: first, to elect a leader to do all the thinking for it; second, to dissolve itself as a body so as not to interfere with the free functioning of the leader.

Now arises a corollary question: Who is to be considered as material worthy of election to the National Committee? To my mind, the general qualification should be: anyone who shows talent or promise either as a leader or organizer or who is sincerely devoted to the study and application of Marxist theory to the development of the party. Candidates for membership on the committee must demonstrate at least a latent ability to assume political responsibility and to estimate events and persons for their political values. The National Committee of a bolshevik party is a working committee, holding in its hands the very life of the party; it is not an honorary society, to which people are elected as a reward for good behavior!

In its operation, the committee should offer an arena for the steady, living, mutually integrated functioning of all of its members. This functioning will necessarily be diversified (members of the Political Committee, party functionaries, field representatives in certain types of work, a direct link between the committee and the ranks, etc.) but every member should feel himself an integral part of the national organization, his work supervised and directed by those who coordinate the work from the center.

The members of the committee in the field bear the responsibility of interpreting party policy not only to the membership but also to workers outside our ranks. Since party policy is adjusted in respect to every major political event nationally and internationally, the political and economic occurrences which shape our policy and toward which party attitudes must be taken must be freely discussed among committee members and the application of policy justified in the light of the Marxist method of analysis. This is necessary not only for the development of individual members of the Committee but for safeguarding the presentation of the party position in places outside the center.

In the Committee, of all places, must there be discussion -- nay, perhaps even argument! The life of the party hinges upon it, if for no other reason than that the relationship between the ranks and the field members of the Committee (who depend largely upon the channel of the Committee for their information and education in political matters) is an intimate one which affects the relationship of the party to the mass very quickly. Decisions on political matters must be collective decisions, even if the involvement of the field members is carried only to the extent of informing them after the event upon the reasons advanced in arriving at a decision and the possible arguments pro and con which were raised. Certainly, if a political argument arises involving a programmatic attitude and serious disagreement ensues in the Political Committee, documents on the discussion must be issued and the field members drawn into the discussion (if for no other than educational reasons) and encouraged to express criticism or make a contribution to the question.

But I must digress a moment, for, as happens every time the question of the right and need to discuss party policy comes up, the one who raises the issue is placed upon the defensive as if some indecent procedure were being proposed. First of all, let it be said once for all time that discussion does not necessarily imply irreconcilable disagreement. Discussion implies the application of a number

of minds (brought to their present condition of non-identity by diverse experiences and different degrees of development) to the solution of an important problem and the orienting of the activities of everyone involved toward the application of the adopted solution to the requirements of life.

Certainly when policies are proposed and decided upon in the sphere of revolutionary politics, involving as they do the lives and future of numberless individuals, anyone who dares consider himself worthy of a position of leadership in a party obligates himself to take a serious and active interest in the refinement of these policies! (I should like to say just in passing -- and timidly these days -- that I see nothing obscene or disgraceful even in argument or serious disagreement, either in the committee or in the party, provided it takes place upon a worthy issue!)

Some one is certain now to throw in my face the accusation that I am demanding "argument for the sake of argument." I am not; I am criticizing a condition where there is a distinct and in my opinion dangerous lack of discussion -- and even argument if you like! -- of policy in our party. The following paragraphs will show why I think this.

I have been a member of the National Committee for the two years since the last convention. In this time, save for the voting at the Plenum last October (some members, by the way, were absent and therefore did not vote even on this occasion) the members of the Committee not resident in New York have been asked to vote on only one proposition: the decision to call the next convention! (Since, in line with the policy of the Committee, I do not keep any records of Committee business, I have here had to rely upon memory, but I have checked with two other non-resident members in two other cities and neither of them can recall ever having voted on anything beside the convention call in these two years). In other words, those members of the Committee who do not happen to live in the Center were elected at the last convention, patted on the head and sent home to wait either to be summoned to a Plenum to vote on party policy or to await the moment when they were to set the time for their demise or reelection as members of the National Committee!

In these two years the only documents concerning policy received by the non-resident members were the Morrow article and, in recent months (because of certain differences among the comrades in jail and as part of the pre-convention period) a few letters dealing with controversial matters and the draft of the international resolution to be submitted to the convention.

The sole regular nexus between the National Office and the field members of the Committee has been the minutes, which I find totally undecipherable in their great bulk. There is in most instances absolutely no way of telling from them what the facts in a disputed issue may be, what proposals are made nor who made them. The minutes serve only one purpose: to show that meetings of the members in New York are held, even if we in the field are not informed thereof for a month or six weeks after the date of the session. I have repeatedly complained to members of the Committee in the

National Office about the inadequacy of the minutes and have suggested that, if nothing more informative can be transmitted to the non-resident members through the minutes, they be not sent out.

The inevitable questions arise: Did anything worth discussing in the National Committee of a bolshevik party happen during these two years? Were documents written on any controversial matter and were they of such a nature that members of the Committee should have received them?

I am ashamed to answer the first question! Has there ever in the history of our present party been a more pregnant period than the one embraced by the last two years? There have been war, invasion, incipient revolution, the incarceration of leaders of our movement in two countries, growing rebellion in the organized labor movement! And yet the National Committee of our party -- as a committee -- has not discussed these matters in the light of the special political approach of a Marxist organization.

The non-resident members of the Committee have been put in the embarrassing position of having to await the arrival of an issue of our public press to determine the details of party policy on matters upon the formulation of which those precise members should have been consulted! If their advice in the formulation of party policy is not important, why then have they been put on the leading committee?

If the excuse is offered that sometimes there is not time to poll the entire membership of the committee, that can be accepted in some instances -- but it is no excuse for the committee's never having been consulted as a whole in the entire two years, save for the few days at the Plenum! Nor is it an excuse for not having submitted discussion material on these matters, even after public announcement of a policy. This circumstance could be explained (but not yet excused, mind you!) only if, in all this time, no difference of political interpretation on any of these vital matters had been expressed in the New York section of the Committee; this I know is not true.

How many documents on political questions came to the attention of the New York members of the Committee I have no way of knowing. If in two years not one single member of the National Committee of our party nor any rank-and-file member ever presented in written form a political analysis or criticism of party policy, I should consider it an amazing and alarming fact. I am confident it is not true and I base my confidence upon the fact that at the Plenum certain documents were actually presented to the Committee.

For several months last year a very heated and important argument, hinging upon the question of democratic centralism, was conducted in one of our most important industrial fractions. (It is interesting to note that the minutes of the Committee which came to me during this long period were so marvelously clear that for some time I labored under the delusion that -- suddenly and for no reason I could imagine -- we had a large and active fraction in the needle

trades; and, when it became clear to me that this guess was all wet, I spent another couple of months haunted by an uneasy feeling that we were operating on a grand scale in a rival political party! It was not until I got to New York for the Plenum and the question was placed upon the agenda that I knew even the identity of the fraction in which the argument was taking place, let alone what the argument was about.) In the course of this disagreement documents were drawn up on both sides, since much of the argument took place by mail from places outside the Center. These documents were given the field members on the first day of the Plenum and we were expected in the course of the few free hours we might have between sessions to read and digest the material submitted and vote upon an issue which the New York section of the Committee had argued for months.

I protested against this handling of an important issue and formally asked that any future documents in this case or in similar cases be made available to the non-resident members of the Committee. I can only say in conclusion that I have never heard a word about this controversy since the Plenum; I do not know whether the disagreement was reconciled and if it was, upon what basis.

Another and more serious disagreement developed in the sphere of party policy in connection with the now famous Morrow-Morrison amendments to the Plenum resolution. These amendments came as the outgrowth of a disagreement on policy which had begun in July at the time of Mussolini's end. No one who was present ever told me so, but I am confident that there must have been numerous arguments in the Committee in New York between the adherents of the two conflicting positions. No one can deny that it was an important issue and no one can deny either that it was one which should have been used for the education of the members of the National Committee, especially those out of the Center and therefore separated from the benefits of the richer political environment existing there. Yet those of us who were not in New York found ourselves suddenly and with no preparation confronted with an important and "heated" disagreement and were asked to cast our votes, with so little preparation, in the determination of policy which would exert international influence at a moment of incipient revolution! It had to lead, as it did, to confusion and delay.

I am convinced that the reasons for this obviously inadequate handling of the affairs of the National Committee springs simply from a failure on the part of the members of the Political Committee to implement what I am sure must be their understanding of the relationship between themselves and the rest of the National Committee. Certainly it cannot be argued that no greater connection between the Center and the field members of the Committee is possible. If that were true we would be living in a state of semi-legality; if that is considered true by anyone in the leadership, the party should be so informed and the entire apparatus should be reorganized on a fundamentally different basis from the one we have today.

It is inconceivable that anyone should argue that discussion matter on Marxian politics cannot be circulated among members of the Committee by mail. Or that material critical, for instance, of government policy cannot be so circulated. Heaven knows that even

the bourgeois public press -- to say nothing of some of the liberal press -- finds it easy enough to print critically analytical material on international and national events! Cannot we go even as far as they?

It is to be sincerely hoped that the relationship dealt with here will not be allowed to persist when the next National Committee is elected.

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A related question is that of the composition of the Political Committee. At present that committee is made up of all members of the National Committee in residence in the Center. In my opinion, the principle of simple residence in New York is an entirely unacceptable one as a basis for membership in the Political Committee of our party.

A minor objection, but one which should be mentioned, is that this method of selection puts the Committee members in New York, on the basis of geographical considerations, in virtual charge of the initiation of party policy and emphasizes the schism between New York and the rest of the country which we have striven for decades to overcome.

Just as the National Committee should be made up of the best qualified members of the party as a whole, so the Political Committee must be composed of the most politically well developed members of the National Committee. In my opinion, the present Political Committee is, because of its haphazard composition, a caricature of the real thing. I hope the coming convention makes impossible the continued existence of such a principle as the one upon which the Political Committee is now based.

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