

PRE-CONVENTION DISCUSSION

Not Only Self-Criticism But Also Self-Correction!

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(Written in Jail)

THE demonstration on March 6th marked the beginning of a mass movement, in the real sense of the term, behind the Communist Party. These demonstrations indicated two things:

(1) The radicalization and militancy of the workers.

(2) The recognition of the Communist Party as the fighter for the working class and its power to rally them.

May First, in many cities, demonstrated the same fact. Demonstrations and parades took place in districts and cities where none had been held before. The mobilizing record achieved through March 6th, the readiness and ability of the Communist Party members to lead the action, the arrest of hundreds of Communists—Party and Y. C. L. members and Young Pioneers—have made the workers understand that there is but one leadership in their struggle and that is Communist leadership.

Two Facts.

It is true that two facts have enabled the Party to become the leader of masses, namely the crisis and the ridding of the Party of its former opportunist leadership and their policy, together with the co-ordination of all Party forces. These are two potent factors that take the first rank.

In judging March 6th and May First, however, we find that what was stated in criticism of March 6th has to be repeated—almost without modification, namely: (1) Failure of the shop nuclei to carry on organizational work in the shops by forming united front committees (which serve as embryos of shop committees affiliating to the T. U. U. L.); (2) failure to concentrate upon certain selected shops and factories of basic and particularly of war industry; (3) failure to mobilize the T. U. U. L. as a whole (although some affiliated unions and leagues functioned better than for March 6th); (4) failure of the T. U. U. L. groups in A. F. of L. and other unions to raise the question of May Day and of strike (although the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. reported more than 20 per cent of its membership out of work at that time—40 per cent of the organized building trades in New York City; (5) failure to rally Negro workers (an unpermissible neglect); (6) failure of the sections and nuclei to be given and to assume responsibility not only for carrying out certain tasks, but for developing initiative in devising methods of doing the work, issuing leaflets, shop bulletins etc.; (7) failure to bring the unemployed to the demonstrations in organized bodies.

Although the fraternal organizations responded better (which showed an improvement in the language work) nevertheless the demonstrations indicate: (1) Failure to correct at all the mistakes of March 6th as far as the districts, sections and nuclei are concerned; (2) failure to draw all the T. U. U. L. unions, leagues and groups into organized mobilization work; (3) failure to build the T. U. U. L.; (4) failure to build the Daily Worker.

Resolutions Not Enough.

It was not sufficient for the Central and District Committees to adopt resolutions on the March 6th and May First campaigns and discuss them with the membership. It was not sufficient to get united support of these resolutions by the membership and in drawing up the plans for May 1st to get recognition of the mistakes of March 6th and look for the correction of the mistakes.

The error of the Districts, and therefore of the Central Committee, was a major political

and organizational error, which, if repeated, will lead not only to the Party's "reliance on spontaneous response" of the masses to the slogans of struggle of the Party, but to the Party losing its ability to mobilize and lead the workers in struggle.

The Question of Spontaneous Action.

The question must be put fundamentally:

1) Can the masses attain the revolutionary goal through spontaneous action; or must the Party organize them through struggle for immediate issues and lead them through more and better organization, greater consciousness and militancy to the overthrow of capitalism? 2) Can the Party expect to organize for the revolutionary liberation of the masses if it continues to fail to plan concretely, carry out and lead in organized manner the masses in demands and demonstrations for immediate issues? 3) Can the Party and the masses learn to approach the revolutionary goal in organized manner if there is continued repetition, with little correction, of basic weaknesses and errors?

Many of these defects are due to the type of district and section committees and nuclei functionaries and bureaus. This must be radically changed in the elections of the coming conventions, at which live, young, militant, new elements who have made the turn and are quickly responsive to rapid changes and new situations, must be elected to responsible positions.

Check-Up and Control.

Secondly, the Party must, from top to bottom, at last institute a regular system of check-up and control. The time has come when we must know exactly where we stand: our forces, strength in the unions, general support, work done for the Party press, building up mass organizations, etc.

Finally, the Party must learn that organization for demonstrations like March Sixth and May First is not mere mobilization for a certain day, but entails the building up of permanent organization, establishing the Party press. The Party has not yet learned how in the process and just in the swing of organizing the masses for a specific demonstration, the best conditions exist for building up the revolutionary unions, the Party press, the workers' defense, the I.L.D., F.S.U., W.I.R., etc., for building up the Party. The Party still conceives of the building up of these organizations as distinct and separate campaigns.

This is a serious mistake. March Sixth and May First afforded splendid opportunities for doing all of this work, which would not only have made the demonstrations even more imposing, but would have left permanent organization in many shops and factories.

Coming Tasks.

The Party now faces many union conventions, the July 4-5 Unemployment Convention, August First. These are all part and parcel of the campaigns carried out on March Sixth and May First. They are not separate campaigns, but must be integrated as parts of one another and particularly of the election campaign, which must be their immediate climax.

If this is not done, the Party will develop good agitprop qualities, but will not organize and mobilize the masses in organized manner for the struggle. The Party will not establish itself in basic industry; it will not reach the masses of Negro, women and young workers.

The errors of March Sixth and May First must be corrected at once ideologically and organizationally. Not only criticism and self-criticism, but also correction and self-correction!