

Next Tasks of the Communist Party of the USA

By EARL BROWDER

PREPARING the Communist Party for the tasks of the coming winter, the Central Committee is gathering for a plenary session as this is being written. What must be the central point of concentration of this Plenum, in order that the Communist Party may proceed most effectively to the mobilization and organization of the working class of the United States for the struggle against the effects of the crisis, for the protection of its conditions of life?

FROM PROPAGANDA TO ACTION

The next task of the Party is to find the way *how* to pass from the stage of agitation and propaganda to the stage of active struggle. We must overcome the chief weakness of the Party, which was described by the Communist International when it said:

"The principal weakness of the Party is to be found in the fact that the Party was and remains a good propagandist organization which has not understood how to mobilize the masses for struggle for their immediate demands and especially for their economic demands."

Without in any way becoming less effective in agitation and propaganda, the Party, therefore, must concentrate upon learning how to make this agitation and propaganda serve the needs of the immediate struggles of the workers. We must be not only the Party of ultimate aims, but also the Party of immediate needs and struggles. We must pass from propaganda to action. That is the chief next task of the Party.

LESSONS OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

We have just passed through a major election campaign. What have our experiences taught us in this campaign? Were we able to make use of it as a great mobilization for class struggle, such as, for example, the recent campaign of the German Communist Party?

There were good points to our election campaign. For instance, we more than doubled the Communist vote of 1928; we brought a larger proportion of the Party membership into activity than ever

before; in some places we began to enroll active non-Party workers into our campaign work; our agitational work was of a high order.

But why, with such an active campaign, did we secure a smaller number of votes than there were participants in the August First demonstrations? Or, why was the vote only ten per cent of the number of participants in the March Sixth demonstrations?

The answer must be found in the character of our campaign, which reflects the whole nature of Party work. Our campaign was too general and abstract. We had splendid general slogans, which the workers approved and cheered; but these good general slogans were not transformed into concrete slogans of the every-day life of the different localities. We did not show the workers how, by joining the Communist campaign as well as by voting Communist, they were helping to solve their *immediate problems* of bread and butter. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of them cheered for Communism and voted for the demagogues of the capitalist parties.

This explains the weakness of our election campaign, and also of our trade union work, and of all our mass work generally. We have not yet proved to the masses that the Communist Party is not only the Party of Revolution, but also the Party of today's struggles.

LINKING IMMEDIATE DEMANDS WITH ULTIMATE AIMS

Let us face frankly this fact; our Party and its membership have not yet learned how to link up intimately our general and ultimate slogans with the immediate, partial economic needs and demands of the workers in such a way that the workers generally can understand.

Let us examine, for example, the way in which our unemployment demands were brought to the masses. We put forth the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill. Very good. The workers liked it. But they also realized that it will take a more or less protracted struggle to achieve it, and perhaps even a revolution. In fact, most of our less-skilled campaign speakers emphasized above all else, that to get such unemployment insurance we must overthrow capitalism and establish a Workers' Government. The slogan "Vote for the Insurance Bill" became about the same as the slogan "Workers' Government." We didn't promise "pie in the sky," but it became dangerously similar, something like "relief for the unemployed after the revolution."

But precisely our task was to bring the workers, employed and unemployed, into struggle now for immediate demands, as the only possible means of leading them on further to higher stages of the

class struggle, and eventually to the struggle for power. That old method of linking immediate demands (such as unemployment insurance) with the ultimate aims (Soviet Power), which makes the one seem as far from realization as the other, and to be gained by the same means, must be done away with. We must link them up in the Bolshevik way, showing how the revolutionary struggle led by the Communists is at the same time the most practical producer of immediate relief.

A FALSE ISSUE—PRACTICAL VS. REVOLUTIONARY

Our weakness in this respect become the stock in trade of the reformists and social-fascists. They raise the slogan of "reformist practicality against revolutionary utopianism." To smash this slogan of the reformists, to rob it of its influence over the masses, nothing will serve except demonstration in life, that the reformist methods are not practical, that the revolutionary struggle is also serving the daily bread-and-butter needs of the masses in a practical way.

Already we are providing the proof of this thesis in action—but still on an insufficient scale, and above all, without sufficient consciousness and system. March Sixth was certainly a practical action, and every relief action of the capitalists can be traced directly back to the panic with which they witnessed March Sixth. We, the workers mobilized by the Communist Party, forced the issue of unemployment upon the entire country. That was a practical result, which every worker could see at the time, and resulted in enormous influence for us among the workers. We failed, however, to sufficiently follow up the same line in the next period.

After that first mobilization we should have concentrated upon concrete local demands and actions in support of them. Some steps were made. In New York the demonstration at City Hall while the Committee of Unemployed interviewed the Board of Estimate to demand, a part of the 620 million dollar budget, for the unemployed, was a classical example of the correct line of struggle. It was also a classical example of the practical results of revolutionary action, when the next day after the clubbing of the unemployed delegation, the Board of Estimate revised the budget to give a million dollars to the unemployed. True, this was a mere trifle in amount, but even this mere trifle could not have been gained by the "gentlemanly" procedures of a Reverend Norman Thomas and the socialists generally, but only by the "rude" Bolshevik struggle.

We must in all our words and actions expose the falseness of the reformist slogan of "practical versus revolutionary." We must by word and deed prove to the masses that the only practical road for

day-to-day gains is the road of revolutionary class struggle, under the leadership of the Communist Party.

THE PROBLEM OF REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNIONS

What has been said of the unemployment question applies with full force to the problem of building the revolutionary trade unions, and the revolutionary opposition within the reformist unions. It applies to all phases of the struggle for the economic demands of the workers, the struggle against wage cuts, against speed-up, for the shorter work-day, etc.

It is absolutely true that only the revolutionary class struggle can gain for workers some realization of their immediate demands. Why is it, then, that at a moment when the immediate needs of the workers are most pressing, that our revolutionary trade unions grow very slowly indeed, and some of them even retrogress? Something must be wrong. Is there something wrong with our general line, laid down by the Red International of Labor Unions in its world congresses, or is the fault in our methods of work, in our daily practice?

The answer must be that the line is absolutely correct and that any attempt to change that line can only result in sliding into the swamp of opportunism on one side, or into the desert of sectarianism on the other side. We must find the remedy of our weaknesses in the field of practice, of application—in the field where the general line is concretely applied to life. *We must have a general and specific examination and overhauling of our methods of work.* We must bring our practice into harmony with our theory. We must tie-up most closely the Bolshevik policy with the daily life of the masses. Our theory must really become the guide of our action.

CLEARING OUT REMNANTS OF THE PAST

We have a rich experience to examine, to find our weaknesses. The Illinois miners' strike, the Flint strike, the South, the Philadelphia waterfront, etc., all provide lessons to show us what is wrong with our work, and why our unions do not grow as they should. The reasons, shown by experience, can be summarized as carrying over from the past, the methods of opportunist leadership. These opportunist practices are often supported and masked by sectarian ideas and ultra-left phrases, but when openly right-wing or ultra-left, their opportunist essence remains the same; they cut us off from the masses; they disintegrate our organizations.

What was wrong, for example, on the Philadelphia waterfront? Our comrades, wishing to lead the struggle for immediate demands, found themselves cut off from the army which must make

the struggle, with the result that not only did the strike fail to materialize, but the promising beginnings of organization were temporarily disrupted. The leaders tried to substitute themselves for the masses; they disregarded the principles of revolutionary strike strategy, laid down in the Strassburg resolution of 1929, and tried to develop the strike from above, by methods which disregarded the preparation of and participation by the masses themselves. The intentions of the comrades were, no doubt, of the best; but the finest intentions will not take the place of correct methods and tactics. Their revolutionary impatience for immediate struggle became a pretext for trying to jump over the necessary stage of mass preparation, mobilization, organization and linking up intimately with the masses. The "leftist" form of these mistakes only served to mask the remnants of old methods carried over from the past, an inheritance of opportunism. We must clear up all these remnants of the past, brushing them out of the minds and practical activities of our comrades.

The same problems in differing forms are presented in the Illinois strike, the Flint strike, the South, etc. They are present in all our trade unions and revolutionary oppositions. Right-wing passivity and sectarian impatience with the masses often join hands to block our development along the path of Bolshevik struggle, the path of persistent, patient work with the masses, the path of organized preparations for struggle, the path of practical, detailed attention to the smallest questions, the path of the sure building of a solid structure of working-class power from the bottom up.

GATHERING THE ALLIES OF THE PROLETARIAT

Our Central Committee Plenum must also mark a new step forward in gathering the allies of the working-class around the Communist Party. These allies are, in the first place, the poor farmers and especially the Negro masses. Our basic program on the agrarian and Negro questions, laid down by our Party Convention in June, must now be further clarified, extended, and applied.

On the agrarian program our Convention did not take a final decision because of differences existing between our analysis of the question as it presents itself in America, and the analysis of some leading comrades of the Peasants' International (Krestintern). This has now been given international examination, and the basic line presented to our Convention by the Central Committee has been confirmed. The next step must be the real beginning of serious practical work among the impoverished farmers, and especially among the agricultural workers, taking the struggle against local exploiters and oppressors as the starting points in the struggle against

the capitalist system of exploitation. A farmers' paper must become the leading organ in building and guiding a broad network of farmers' action committees and leagues of struggle.

FOR EQUALITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION FOR NEGROES

With the latest resolution of the ECCI on the Negro question, we are taking a bold step forward in concretizing a Bolshevik program. The struggle for the rights of the Negroes, for complete equality everywhere, and for the right of self-determination in the Black Belt where the Negroes constitute a majority of the population, is the path along which the Communist Party will unite with the workers a powerful ally in the struggle against American imperialism.

The struggle for Negro rights is equally the concern of the white workers as of the Negroes themselves. White workers can never win emancipation without at the same time freeing all oppressed peoples; while the Negro masses can never escape their special oppression without the active help of the white working-class. It is the duty of the white workers especially to take the lead in the struggle against lynchings, jim crowism, and all forms of denial of equality, and to prove to the Negro masses by their deeds that Negro oppression comes from the white ruling class and not from the white workers; that the white workers are not fighting for their own narrow interests, but for the emancipation of all the oppressed, thus building up a firm fraternal solidarity of white and black, which alone can effectively fight and overcome the forces of imperialism.

The slogan of self-determination raises the whole question of national rights of the Negro majority in the Black Belt. It includes the completion of the agrarian revolution in the South by securing for the toiling Negro masses the possession of the land which they till, breaking the power of the local white ruling minority, and establishing the state unity of the Black Belt, which can then decide for itself what relations it shall establish with the United States and other lands. The white working class must be brought to active support of this basic democratic right of self-determination, a right for which the World War was supposed to have been fought according to the hypocritical pronouncements of Woodrow Wilson, but which has been consistently violated and denied in the most brutal, cynical, hideous forms in the South by American imperialism.

The Communist Party comes out boldly as the only Party which fights relentlessly for equality and self-determination for the Negroes. The Negro masses must and will rally to the Communist Party.

FORWARD TO NEW STRUGGLES—NEW VICTORIES

We enter a winter of deep crisis for world capitalism, and for capitalism in the United States. The forces of revolution are rising throughout the world. Buttressed and inspired by the magnificent march of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the oppressed classes and peoples all over the world are gathering their forces and are beginning to struggle for the overthrow of imperialism. In China already is rising the foundations of the Soviet Power. Throughout the colonial world the imperialist regime is shaking under the blows of the rising masses. In Germany and several other countries of Western and Central Europe a severe political crisis is rapidly bringing to maturity the conditions for a revolutionary struggle for power by the workers. In the United States capitalism plunges deeper and deeper into the worst economic crisis of its history, which already presses forty millions of the population into misery, cold, and starvation, and prepares the stage for an unprecedented political crisis.

In this world situation the working class of the United States, and above all its vanguard, the Communist Party, has duties of supreme importance, not only for itself, but also for the world revolution. These duties can only be performed adequately by energetically readjusting all methods of work, by organizing the masses, mobilizing them for struggle for immediate demands, widening the ranks of the Party and building its cadres, building mass revolutionary unions, fighting for the unemployed and uniting them with the employed workers, drawing into the fighting front the poor farmers and Negro masses, and by rousing the masses to the struggle against imperialist war and for defense of the Soviet Union, and for support to the rising colonial peoples, all of which is the only path of preparation for our own "November 7th" which shall end the rule of capitalism.

Forward to new struggles and new victories!