

JAMES P. CANNON
Editor
MARTIN ABERN
MAX SHACHTMAN
MAURICE SPECTOR
Associate Editors

THE MILITANT

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WORKERS (COMMUNIST) PARTY OF AMERICA
P. O. BOX, 120, MADISON SQUARE STATION
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Dear Comrade Trotsky:

By this time you will have received the issues of the Militant and will have learned from them about the decisions of our National Conference. This Conference represented a "forced march" for us and we have suffered somewhat from financial difficulties since. This compelled us to skip the July 15th and the June 15th issues of our paper. We hope now, however, to be able to get out the regular issues every two weeks. We have not abandoned the project of establishing the paper as a weekly, but there must be a longer period of preparation and a firmer financial base established.

The new crisis in the American Party brought about by the sudden removal of the old leadership and the expulsion of Lovestone is creating more favorable opportunities for us in the ranks of the Party members. Our Party was slow to register the factional divisions which have been crystallizing in the International in the recent years, but it is catching up now with real "American" efficiency. The three divisions to be seen in the German movement are already clearly outlined here. The Lovestone faction has not yet brought forward openly the Platform of the International Rights, but it is going through a diplomatic preparation to do so.

You ask about the position of Lore. It is quite a confused one, and in many respects contradictory. He prints in his paper, "The New York Volkszeitung" many of your articles and bitterly denounces the ~~persecutions~~ persecutions of the Stalin Regime against the Opposition. But, so far as we have seen, he has never yet made a clear declaration in support of the Opposition Platform. On the other hand he shows a strong sympathy for Brandler-Thalheimer and has a tendency to adopt their viewpoint in regard to the German movement. In personal ~~conversations~~ conversation he told one of our comrades (Comrade Shachtman) that he had written to Brandler criticizing his attitude toward International and Russian questions and urging him to support the Opposition. In the same conversation he expressed the opinion that the Russian Rights lead to the restoration of capitalism and that only the platform of the Opposition can save the revolution. These opinions are not so clearly stated in his paper. As a rule he confines himself to reporting events in the International, protesting against violations of party democracy and refraining from comment on the principle issues involved.

We have had no relations with him beyond casual conversations and have not considered any serious collaboration possible unless a more definite political premise for it could be established. On many questions of the day he shows marked tendencies to draw social-democratic rather than Communist conclusions. That is not to compare him, of course, to the official socialists. He represents more the type of the pre-war left-socialist who wants to consider himself a communist. His tendency toward "right" deviations has been fostered in late years by his isolation and lack of political co-workers who might influence his views. Some antagonisms between him and our group exist from former times and hamper the establishment of such relations as might afford us a better opportunity to influence his policy.

As you probably know, his regard for you is very high and many comrades

think a direct pressure from you would greatly affect his course. He was in correspondence with Radek and had received a letter from him attempting to explain the capitulation. Lore (in conversation) characterized Radek's argument as worthless and declared again his great admiration for your course. If time allows, we think the best approach to a clarification of Lore's position and a final settlement of the question whether any kind of collaboration between him and our League is possible for be for you to write to him and press him for a statement of position. From this other steps might follow until the question is definitely disposed of in one way or another. Please let us know if you agree with this suggestion.

Since the American Party as a whole has been barely more than a propaganda society with only a few thousand members, and most of them foreign-born, the Opposition is bound to be a first a comparatively small group. To the average American militant worker, who has never been greatly interested in theory, the questions raised by the struggle of the Opposition seems very remote. The past ten months--since we started the open fight--has been a period of ideological concentration of a nucleus in preparation for the future. Our Conference showed that our ranks are quite firmly united on the main questions and that they are prepared for a long siege. We are beginning to develop public activities, but this work will be slow in view of our limited forces and the complications presented by the nature of the struggle with the official party leadership. In the ranks of the left wing labor movement, among former militants of the I.W.W. and in a few important labor organizations we have sympathizers and some direct supporters. Up to the present, however, this is more in the nature of individual "connections" than mass support. We have a few connections with the German comrades, but nothing adequate.

We are on friendly terms with Eastman who has helped us in various ways as a "travelling companion" who does not formally belong to our organization. We have some supporters among the Jewish workers in the Needle trades, but our work there against the "Forward" as well as against the Stalinist "Freiheit" which becomes more and more like an imitation in vileness of the Forward, is hampered by the lack of a Jewish paper. Great possibilities exist in this field to broaden our movement, but poverty makes the necessary paper at present impossible.

Unfortunately we have no connection yet among the Negroes. All our efforts to win at least one of the Negro comrades in the Party to our side failed. We recognize the great importance of this question for the future and shall not cease our efforts to make a beginning in this field. On this question we had a big discussion at our Conference over the section of our Platform in which we advocate the slogan of the right of self-determination for the Negroes. This position was adopted by the Party at the direction of the E.C.C.I. but it met with strong opposition there from many of the ~~Negro~~ Negro comrades. There are big sections of the southern part of the United States where the Negro population is the majority and where they are now deprived of political and other rights more flagrantly than in the North. It was decided to conduct a discussion on this whole question in our ranks and the National Committee decided to ask your opinion about the appropriateness of this slogan of the right of self-determination for the Negroes.

You will notice from the Militant that we are waging a hard fight against the present tactical line of the Party on the trade union question, the United front, etc. Whereas a year ago we criticised the party tactics from the left for its failure to move toward the organization of unorganized workers who were breaking out into strikes, for its policy of united front combinations with progressives in which independent communist policy was submerged, etc., now we find ourselves in violent disagreement with the party policy from another side. Taking over the whole of the new ultra-left

evangel of the E.C.C.I., and adding distortions and exaggerations of their own, the Party leadership carries on in such a way as to destroy ~~want~~ what remains of the prestige of the movement. Their trade union policy has become little more than a pale imitation of the old sectarianism of the I.W.W. and the S.L.P.(DeLeonites) and their conception of the united front has become a "conference" of the Party with representatives of various auxiliaries directly and immediately controlled by the party.

In our Platform published in the Militant of February 15th we have attempted to formulate tactics for the American movement. We would greatly appreciate your opinion and advice on these questions. In general, we think it is quite necessary now for the Opposition to concentrate on the working out of practical tactics for the daily struggle in the various countries. It is especially necessary for us to have concrete formulations of position on the trade union question and on the question of the united front. The development and consolidation of the Right Wing on an International scale makes this now doubly necessary. The "practical" program of the Right Wing will otherwise mislead many comrades who react against the ultra left course.

We have heard from comrade Rosmer about the projected magazine "Opposition" and greet it as a sign of the strengthening of the Center of the Opposition Internationally. We hope it will prepare the way for the formal convening of an International Conference.

With the very best wishes for your health, we remain,

With Communist greetings,

National Committee,
Communist League of America (Opposition)

J. Plamondon
Secretary.