COMMUNIST PARTY, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
DISTRICT 17,
Birmingham, Ala.

E. CAMPBELL,
New York City.

DEAR COMRADE CAMPBELL: I wish to take up a couple of questions dealing with the August 1 demonstrations.

In the directives issued by the central committee organizing department under point (3) I read the following: "Instead of calling for a mass political strike, we shall direct our efforts toward the organization of the workers in the shops into August 1 committees around the issues of the campaign."

It seems clear from this that the party will not this year advance the slogan of a mass political strike on August 1. I recall very well that last year the party issued such a slogan, and issued it not only as an agitational slogan. On the contrary the central committee directives for the August 1 campaign last year declared specifically that in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Detroit this slogan was to be used as a definite slogan of action. In fact, concrete directives were given as to the methods and forms of calling the workers of these cities on strike on August 1.

At that time (August 1 last year) I was opposed to this as a slogan of action, although of the opinion that the slogan of a mass political strike must be advanced as an agitational slogan only. I presented a resolution on this to the Cleveland district buro prior to August 1. The resolution was passed by the buro after a long discussion and forwarded to the central committee. I never learned if the central committee took action on it.

As to the rejection of the slogan by the central committee for August 1 this year there can be only three reasons for this: (1) The slogan was incorrect last year and remains incorrect this year; (2) the masses of the workers are less radicalized this year and therefore this slogan which was correct last year is incorrect to-day; (3) the central committee has committed an error in not issuing the slogan this year.

It is my opinion that last year the slogan was wrong as a slogan of action, for the reasons dealt with in detail in the resolution of the Cleveland buro, but was correct as an agitational slogan. It is my opinion that the struggle has not sharpened sufficiently and the working class is not yet sufficiently radicalized to warrant the issuing of this slogan as a slogan of action this year. Nevertheless I consider it a mistake not to put forward this slogan at all in connection with August 1. Certainly in the immediate future the mass political strike will and must become one of the most important weapons of the working class here in America. In fact March 6 and May 1 showed us that under certain circumstances where the party has deep roots and wide influence, where radicalization has proceeded farthest, the mass political strike is to-day a usable weapon. We can not wait until we are convinced that the masses are ready to put it into action to throw out this slogan. If we are in the immediate future to actually mobilize the American working class for mass political strikes we must popularize this slogan to-day and make it thoroughly understandable to the workers.

I think the American workers will receive their primary training in the mass political strike from two main sources: (1) From economic strikes which develop political demands and implications and which eventually draw into action masses of workers not involved directly in the economic conflict at first, but which are drawn into the movement by the political aspects of the struggle (solidarity, protest, strikes, etc.); (2) from the careful use of the slogan of a mass political strike by the party in its campaigns similar to the August 1 campaign. For this reason I consider that the party is incorrect in not issuing the general agitational slogan of "down tools on August 1" and tying up this whole question of a political strike on August 1 with the economic demands of the workers, the question of the conditions in the shops and unemployment as a result of a crisis, the accelerated preparations for, and danger of, war as a result of the crisis, etc.

In conclusion, even if the central committee is correct in discarding this slogan this year, it can not contribute to the training and education of the party unless it carefully explains the reasons for this abrupt change in tactics. If this slogan was incorrect last year we must exercise self-criticism and explain to the party why this slogan was incorrect. To do otherwise can only confuse the party membership and the lower strata of the leadership who know nothing of the discussions in the leading body of the party before this decision was arrived at. In general, it seems to me that such abrupt changes in tactics can only be made when at the same time the most careful analysis of the reasons for the change are also forthcoming. Only through this can we guarantee the successful application of the changed tactic.

With communist greetings,

TOM JOHNSON, *District Organizer.*

P. S.—I want to add one thing. This change without explanation is particularly bad in view of the campaign on this issue we carried on in the press against the Lovestone renegades. I remember that I was accused as having conciliatory tendencies and offering aid and comfort to the renegades last year for even questioning the mass political strikes as a slogan of action and entirely realizable on August 1 last year.