

Perspectives for Our Party

JAY LOVESTONE

(Concluded from last issue)

The Condition of the Labor Movement.

During this period the bourgeoisie reap a harvest not only in profits, not only in surplus value but also politically, in strengthening and consolidating their class position through the control of the labor lieutenants of American imperialism and the leadership of the trade union bureaucracy. American imperialism has been able to win away many of the gains that the working class has won; even some that the skilled workers have won. The class struggle takes on the character of an attack not only on economic but also on social rights. The right to organize, the right to maintain unions are being whittled away sometimes with a struggle and sometimes without. We are heading toward the time when the right to organize even into a craft union, when the right to maintain even craft unions, will be a right challenged by the bourgeoisie. We are heading towards the time when such elementary fundamental rights as the very recognition of the strike as a weapon in its most general sense will be challenged. The right to organize into a union, even the right to belong to a union will be challenged.

What is the condition of the labor movement? The weakness of the unions needs no elaboration. Take the United Mine Workers, the very backbone of the American trade union movement. The tragic conditions which show themselves in the loss of 200,000 members in the last two years are only one indication of the general downward trend, the general weakening of the trade union movement.

We have already seen the reasons for the weakening of the working class. We must also bear in mind that there are forces at work which tend to resist this downward trend. There are forces in the working class of semi-skilled and of unskilled workers that now and then have in recent months with energy and with courage resisted the aggressions of the bourgeoisie, resisted company unionism. Our Party by participating in these struggles, by extending the development of these struggles, has provoked a new attack upon it.

The Offensive Against the Party.

When in 1919, with the revolutionary sentiment far stronger in the United States, in so far as sentiment is concerned, when the bourgeoisie launched an offensive against the working class they used other methods than they use today. Today the bourgeoisie in carrying on the offensive against the working class uses primarily its agents in the labor movement, the Wolls, the Greens, and others who are doing the work which Palmer tried to do in 1919.

Why this offensive against the Party and where does it show itself? The primary reasons for the offensive are the following. First of all, the Party reorganization. As a result of the Party reorganization we have had not only the organization of a number of well-functioning shop nuclei but the general orientation of the Party has been changed. The general level of the Party activity has been elevated—it has its face to the masses and the basic industries. Second, the achievements of the Party in penetrating certain basic unions of the American Federation of Labor. Third, in leading strikes. In the past 18 months the Party has shown that it is capable through its fractions, its members in trade unions, to lay down such policies as will bring successful direction for strikes. Fourth, we have in the last months contributed something towards the organization of the unorganized. Fifth, we have been able to throw out such issues and such slogans as will create a rift in the trade union bureaucracy. The American working class is not homogeneous. The American labor aristocracy as a section of that class is not homogeneous. Not even the trade union bureaucracy has a homogeneous character. There are divisions. It is one of the most important tasks to throw out such slogans and develop such campaigns as will sharpen these divisions, as will intensify the trend towards a rift in the trade union bureaucracy.

Groupings in the A. F. of L. Executive Council.

Anyone who will maintain that even the American Federation of Labor Executive Council is a homogenous group is wrong. In it there are three groups. The lines may not be clear—the lines of demarcation may be blurred, but the divisions exist. The group in the lead is headed by Matthew Woll, representing a highly skilled craft—a craft so skilled that it can deal with its labor as something it can job on the market. The middle group is represented by Green, who, although he may be president, is not the leader of the American Federation of Labor. The leader of the A. F. of L.—the leader of the American trade union movement is Woll. The third group headed by Noonan represents the leadership of unions in an industry which is rapidly losing its place as a skilled industry, as a union which can control the labor market or have any influence in dominating job control. These divisions do not reflect themselves clearly but they exist. If our Party can develop and sharpen these differences our Party will succeed in coming into a position where we will have influence over the masses following these leaders and win away masses from them.

Why is Woll leader of the trade union movement? The left today is still very weak, in the official family. The center has no policy. It follows the policy of the right and is equally reactionary but because it comes from mass unions is more subject to the pressure of the masses and a little less aggressive and outspoken. The right wing has a very clear and definite policy. Their policy is to turn these trade unions which exist today into real agencies of the em-

ployers. Matthew Woll has this conception of the development of class relations in the United States.

The first stage is the stage of conflict.

The second is the stage of collective bargaining.

The third is the present stage towards which we are developing—class collaboration—class peace.

Matthew Woll was appointed chairman of a committee to investigate company unionism at the last convention. An appropriation of \$200,000 was named for Woll's commission. His recommendation to fight company unionism will be something like this. The unions must become organs which will supply workers who are docile, obedient; workers who are efficient. The role of the leaders is to manage and organize the unions in such a way as to increase the productivity, the efficiency, the docility and obedience of the workers. They will be organs of labor committed against strikes, against militancy and against the conflict between the working class and employing class because the manager of the union will be the central figure in the so-called management schemes. They don't call it "class collaboration" but "union-management co-operation" which means we are here having further evidence of the trend towards the time when the right to strike, when the right to organize, the right to maintain a union—even a craft union—will be challenged. And in this clash of forces, the Wolls, and Wilsons, and Lynches, will be on the side of the bourgeoisie, fighting even against the inadequate craft unions we have had in this country. The Party, participating in these struggles which we are heading to, in struggles for such rights will be able to get into contact with, influence and lead masses who today hate the Communists. When they find that we are in the front on such fundamental issues and when they find that we are the ones who are most energetic in leading these struggles, many of them will follow us and come to us politically.

One of the basic reasons for the offensive against the Communists—for the offensive against the left wing today is to be found in the fact that the leadership in the American trade union movement very consciously follow the path that they must destroy all possible opposition. The more conscious the opposition the more necessary that it be destroyed. This is part of the general campaign on behalf of the bourgeoisie, the readiness of the bureaucracy to destroy the forces of opposition in the trade union movement, and to oust even those who fight for the maintenance of trade unions on the inadequate basis on which most of them are organized today.

"Bourgeoisification" and Pessimism.

Is American imperialism so strong that the whole working class has been corrupted—has been bourgeoisified by the ability of the American ruling class to give certain concessions to the workers? No! It is true that American imperialism has been able and will be able for some time to come to corrupt, to have a bourgeoisifying

effect on the labor aristocracy but it is absolutely false and it is anti-Leninist to say that American imperialism has been able to bourgeoisify, to corrupt, the whole working class. Those who say that labor is becoming capital are basing their judgments on temporary and superficial phenomena. When they speak of labor this way they see only certain parts of the working class and certain developments. They do not see the whole working class in struggle. There are divisions created in the working class by the effect of imperialism but if we are to maintain that our working class has been bourgeoisified then we would have only this condition to face in our Party. First, either there is no room for a Communist Party in the immediate future or second, that it must be a Communist Party of pure disciples—a sectarian group organized on the narrowest basis. When we speak of this “bourgeoisification of the working class” let us not look only on the upper strata of the working class. We must also see the miners’ struggle against wage cuts, the textile workers who invariably have poor conditions and low pay, the great millions of unorganized workers that have not been corrupted by or shared in the super profits of our ruling class. It is very true our Party is facing tremendous difficulties; no Party faces such difficult objective conditions as our Party is facing. It is a question of perspective. Shall we say there are difficulties? Yes. Shall we say that the tempo for a mass communist Party has slowed down? Yes. But there is no basis for pessimism. Our Party has many opportunities for activity and the difficulties which we have must not be pressed in the forefront. If we do this, if we say that there are only difficulties, then the conclusion is not to do anything. We must combat such pessimism in our own ranks. We must teach our party and the non-party workers to see the American working class as a whole, to see its intensely exploited sections, to see the reason for struggle and opportunities of struggle. We have weaknesses in our capitalism. We have opportunities in our work. Our Party is the only Party of opposition to the encroachments of imperialists—to the encroachments of big capital and when we speak of the opportunities of our Party we speak of the ability of our Party to adjust itself to meet the needs of the working class.

The Main Task of Our Party

The main task of the Party, the primary task of our Party, still is to hasten the development of the working class politically. This task is achieved primarily through our united front activities. A few words about our united front policy. We do not view the united front as a weapon which is to be used solely or which enables us solely to expose some reactionary figure in the trade unions or in the working class. To us it is the key to our activities because through this we Communists are able to come into contact with non-Communist workers, to come in contact with them so as to increase their development, to increase our influence over them by making

them move toward the left. Any movement of any section of the working class as long as it is a move toward the left, it is our task to increase the tempo of that move. We do say that the Party must be allowed to hang out its shingle in the united front. Our task is to consider: Whether such instances decrease the opportunities of our Party coming in contact with these non-Communist masses; (2) will it decrease the movement of non-Communist masses with whom we can come into contact? (3) will it slacken the development of these masses through the particular united front toward the left? We are not mechanical on this question. Very often it is necessary that the outward leadership must be in the hands of non-partisans, of non-Communist workers. It is our job to develop initiative amongst these non-Communist masses to the extent that we have them moving toward the left—moving in our direction. When we are not officially a participant in a certain united front it does not mean that the Party is not actually a part of it.

The Labor Party Movement.

Now as to the Labor Party movement. We have seen the reasons for the slowing down of the tempo for the Labor Party. The fundamental reasons for a Labor Party movement still exist. They have not been removed. One of our primary tasks is to hasten the development of a Labor Party, a Party of the working class.

Our Trade Union Work.

But the most important and dominant tasks of our Party are to be found in the trade union field. The trade union work at this time is the key to the success of all our Party campaigns. To the extent we develop a foothold in the trade union movement we can develop successes in our general united front activities. The progress of the Party in the trade union field is recognized by all sections of the Party. It was recognized as such by the American Delegation at the Seventh Plenum without any reservations by the Delegation. What are our main tasks in the trade union work? Primarily they are:

(1) We must draw the Party membership much more into the trade unions than we have drawn them. Larger sections of our Party membership are found in the unions today but we have lots and lots of members who belong in the trade unions or should belong and are not yet inside.

(2) We must see to it that larger numbers of our Party members that are in the unions participate actively. It is not enough to have a card. There should be nothing too small, nothing too difficult for a Party member to do in the trade union.

(3) We must develop more clearly our concept of the trade union work. Today we have a much clearer concept than we have ever had. The Party is still finding its way toward a complete program which will enable us to respond more effectively than we

have responded to the needs of the labor movement. The hastening of the development of a left wing movement cannot come through our efforts unless we have such a view. Our general trade union viewpoint is that we reaffirm the position taken by the Plenum on October 23rd. We reaffirm the resolution on the trade union question unanimously adopted by the November Plenum, the basic points of which were laid down in the preamble. We must build the left wing. We must not permit it to be narrowed down to an organization of the Communist Party members with a narrow circle of Communist sympathizers—such an organization cannot be a left wing. It must be much broader.

We must be flexible in our organizational forms for the left wing. We must not be rigid or mechanical or narrow. We must utilize every occasion, every temporary oppositional movement, no matter in what union, no matter how it appears to rise, no matter what issues—we must realize and crystalize out of this opposition forces for the left wing movement.

Industrial unionism—here we must be very careful. First of all we must avoid the chase for the rainbow of industrial unionism. That is not a danger, not a very great danger in so far as our Party is concerned today as a whole. It has outlived that situation or danger. At the same time, we must avoid making a fetish of anti-dual unionism. The test comes in the question of the masses, the size of the masses who can be mobilized in an organization. We want unions to be of a mass character. The policy of the Party in the Passaic strike was correct and when the U. T. W. refused to organize or to participate in the organization of those unorganized workers, the policy of the Party was absolutely correct when we said we will not be frightened by this bugaboo of dual unionism. We will organize our own apparatus to organize the unorganized. And once we have them organized we do not want to make the opposite mistake. Our main task is to take those workers whom we have organized and draw them into the main stream of the American labor movement, the trade union movement as personified by the American Federation of Labor.

To summarize, our main tasks in the trade union field are: (1) More members into the union; those there to have greater activity. Build trade union fractions. Build the left wing; boost and broaden Labor Unity, help the left wing make it a living organ with mass circulation. This does not mean that we must sit back and wait until it develops. We must take every possible step to help the left wing make it a satisfactory living and fighting organ.

(2) Organization of the unorganized. This is one of our most basic problems. With the small proportion of the American working class organized we can see very clearly how important this task is. To the extent that we can draw new blood into the trade union movement, to the extent that we can draw semi-skilled and unskilled workers into the trade unions, to that extent can we invigorate the existing organizations and turn them from the pres-

ent character of largely inadequate organizations of the class struggle into militant, energetic organs of the class struggle.

(3) Fighting class collaboration. Here we must do quite a little work. We have fought it with some success in a number of instances. But the outstanding feature is that in so far as we have met it today it has been by denunciation. We must learn to meet such a danger as company unionism, such schemes of class collaboration, as the B. & O. Plan and the industrial democracy schemes—not merely by exposing the character of them but by proposing certain positive demands—certain positive programs by which the workers participating in those schemes will fight. And such demands, that the workers will fight for them and which will enable us to show the fraudulent character of the schemes and will bring them to fight for conditions which will lead to a fight for genuine unions, unions that will genuinely fight for the interests of the working class.

Our Struggle Against Imperialism.

As to the anti-imperialist activities of the Party. The central task of the Party today in its campaigns in the anti-imperialist work is the mobilization of the American masses for a fight against the war danger. At the present moment that involves particularly in the United States the fight against the encroachments of American imperialism in Nicaragua, in Mexico, in China. American imperialist policy in China is inseparable from its imperialist policy in Nicaragua and in Mexico. One section of the world cannot be separated from other sections of the world. China is the most pressing question of our Party because in the Chinese situation we at this time have the greatest danger of new world war. In the Chinese situation at this time the Party is confronted with the task of mobilizing our forces to prevent American imperialism from plunging into and participating directly or indirectly in a war against the Chinese revolution. That revolution is more and more showing signs of getting into that stage where the leaders of the revolution—where the only forces that can lead the revolution to a successful conclusion are the following: The proletariat in alliance with the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie in which the proletariat must exercise dominant power. And because of the trend in that direction there is a likelihood that the imperialist power, facing a greater enemy than the forces of opposition amongst themselves, will unite for a war against the Chinese revolution which will inevitably and invariably mean an attack against the Soviet Union. The importance of such an attack, the danger and significance of such an attack, against the Soviet Union needs no emphasis for us today. Because of the key position of American imperialism it is obvious that to the extent that we can stay the hand of American imperialism from getting into the Chinese situation, from participating in a campaign against the Chinese revolution, against the Soviet Union, to that extent is there less likelihood of a war development. We had in general established a policy in the

Hands Off China campaign and with this new turn of events we decided to give it a direction towards developing it into an anti-war campaign. This is correct. We must not only carry out the policies we adopt one day—we must be able to broaden them as new objective developments take place. After the developments at Nanking it appeared to everybody that English and American imperialist powers had locked their interests, had joined hands for a campaign against China. It was at that moment that the Chinese war danger was greatest, because Great Britain and other powers will hesitate a hundred times before they open a war against China and the Soviet Union without knowing full well what the United States will do. The best assurance, the best guarantee is the position of the United States.

(Here follows a detailed report on the activities of the various districts in this connection which is omitted here.)

The Political Bureau has been very active in following the different movements and in adjusting itself and responding to the developments as they occur in China.

China is the key to the war danger. The basic features of the Chinese revolution have been characterized very well by the thesis of the Seventh Enlarged Executive of the Comintern.

Before closing I want to mention several other of our Party campaigns and several features of the present Party situation.

A few words about the reorganization. The last month has seen the highest dues payments in our Party since the reorganization. The last month has seen a dues payment of 9,500. The April figures have not come in. But most of the districts that have submitted their reports show large increases, particularly in the number of new members, the number of new members especially due to the Ruthenberg enrollment has been very large. The number has not been completely tabulated because of the different methods used by the various districts.

The general estimate of our reorganization today can be precisely the one given us by the Comintern. We have had numerous weaknesses, many mistakes. We may have been too speedy—we may have followed incorrect policies in pursuing such methods as tend to break up the Party into too small units. But the resolution of the Comintern declares that our reorganization is a tremendous step forward towards giving the Party a new concept of mass work. It condemns the position of Lore on reorganization and the attitude of those comrades who mask their pessimism as to reorganization under the slogan of "reorganizing the reorganization". We have only begun to meet the difficulties of our reorganization. We have solved only a few of them. We still have the task of developing Party functionaries, of further activizing and politicalizing our units, etc. Our general trend today is a trend which is upward, not only in the increase of members but also in the increased activity of our Party membership.

(The rest of the speech is a detailed informative report on the mistakes and achievements of the Party in its various fields of work.)