

PARTY PRE-CONVENTION DISCUSSION SECTION

By EARL BROWDER
and JOSEPH ZACK.

The Right Danger and Trotskyism in America

The approaching congress of the American C. P. is marked by a sharp factional struggle. The basis of this struggle is a deep principle difference as to the correct orientation of the Party; the differences arise from two opposite perspectives of American imperialist development. The main body of the Party membership is aligned on one side or the other side of this controversy, while outside the Party, recently excluded, stands a small Trotskyist group which showed its head since the Sixth World Congress. The principle task of the Party Congress is to establish the struggle against the Right danger, as the main danger of the Party; secondarily, it is to overcome and liquidate the danger of Trotskyism; thirdly, it is to stabilize the Party leadership. In what relation do these tasks stand to the groupings within the American Party?

Is There a Right Danger in America?

This question may seem superfluous, since now the whole Party is conscious of the Right danger. But it is significant that the Majority of the Central Committee (Lovestone-Pepper leadership) strenuously denied the existence of a Right danger in the Party right up to the eve of the Sixth Congress. They attacked the Minority leadership (Bittelman and others) as being ultra-left. They used themselves organizationally and politically with all the formerly-recognized Right wing elements and tendencies within the Party. Up to the Sixth Congress, it was impossible to attack any manifestation of the Right danger, without finding it under the protection of (or an organic part of) the Central Committee leadership. The ECCI on several occasions, before and after the Sixth Congress, sharply criticized the grossest manifestations of this crystallizing Right wing line, and were also, by the logic of facts, the criticism necessarily found itself directed primarily against the Majority of the Central Committee. From these facts it is established:

- 1.—There is a serious Right danger in America.
- 2.—The Lovestone-Pepper leadership refused to recognize the danger until forced to do so by the C. I.
- 3.—The Right danger is especially acute in America because it has penetrated into the highest leadership of the Party.

Two Contradictory Perspectives.

It is no accident that the Lovestone-Pepper leadership could not see the Right danger. This followed logically from their basic orientation, which has the following characteristics:

- 1.—They maintain that while the rest of the capitalist world is in an acute crisis, America is an exception in this respect, and that its per-

spectives are for "unlimited expansion" and "bigger prosperity than in the period just concluded." (See Lovestone, "Communist," July, 1928; speeches at Sixth Congress of Lovestone and Pepper; Lovestone's report on Sixth Congress to New York membership, etc.)

2.—This American "exceptionalism" applies to the whole tactical line of the C. I. as applied to America. (This theory pervades all the writings and speeches of the Lovestone-Pepper group up until the present.)

3.—There is no general process of radicalization of the masses, but rather the opposite theory of "bribery of larger strata of the working class"; analysis of elections as a "sweeping victory for reaction"; characterization of the sectional crises in coal, garment, oil and textile industries, as "crises of growth," laying a basis for "greater expansion of American imperialism." (Lovestone at 6th Congress.)

4.—The masses of workers are increasingly coming under the influence of the A. F. of L., which will probably experience a new period of growth, while the prospect of an independent movement of workers, the establishment of new unions on the basis of class struggle is very poor indeed. (Their struggles against IV Profintern Congress; Pepper's article, "Communist," June, 1928; speeches at 6th Congress.)

5.—It is necessary that the Party program should be "A Program for Prosperity." (See Wolfe, "Communist," July, 1927.), and should not base itself upon the growing contradiction of American imperialism.

With such an orientation as the foregoing, it is inevitable that the Lovestone-Pepper group fell into the grossest opportunism, and that it fought against the Minority of the Party as "ultra-Left." (It is only in the last weeks, under the necessity to find a "Right danger" against which to fight, that they have accused the Minority of being the Right wing.)

The Minority has proposed and fought for a program and tactics which were based upon an entirely different orientation. The Minority views have the following characteristics, as contrasted with the Majority: (For substantiation, see especially document to the Congress, entitled "The Right Danger in the American Party," and Congress speeches):

1. America is more and more becoming involved in the world crisis of capitalism. The "prosperity period" 1923-27, exhausted the possibilities of expansion of the home market, which is now shrinking with every new technical advance.

In the world market, American imperialism is ever more sharply encountering the limitations raised by rival imperialists, in the form of sharper price-competition as well as the form of colonial monopolies. The gap between productive capacity and actual production is constantly widening; the number of workers engaged in industry is positively shrinking; structural unemployment has made its appearance in America involving millions of workers. Therefore, further expansion leads inevitably to more drastic attacks upon the living standards of the masses and to an attempt at the armed redivision of the world's markets. This is thus the period of approaching the apex of growth of American imperialism.

2. The foregoing factors are rapidly eliminating any "exceptional" features of American imperialism which might require a different tactical line for the C. I. in America; more and more do American problems fit in to the tactical world orientation of the C. I.

3. There is a general process of radicalization of the masses, as yet vague and undefined but deep and full of potentiality. Already our Party has found itself, as a whole, dragging behind this process of radicalization, and it required the beginnings of independent mass actions, undertaken even sometimes without the participation or knowledge of our Party (Colorado miners, textile, coal, subways, oil, automobiles) to force even the Minority into an energetic struggle for a re-orientation of the Party generally on this question.

4. The A. F. of L. continues to move to the Right, incorporating itself more fully into the capitalist structure in every sense, and narrowing its base even more to a few privileged or highly skilled groups (building, printing). This fact, in conjunction with the beginnings of radicalization of the masses, makes necessary and inevitable the rise of a new mass labor movement, organized outside the A. F. of L. into new unions. The conscious Left wing elements must set the organization of the unorganized into new unions as their central task in this period.

5. It is necessary that the Party program shall base itself upon an exposure of the illusions of "prosperity" which have no reality for the masses, upon the growing acuteness of the class struggle, upon the ripening contradictions of American imperialism at home and abroad, upon an energetic struggle against rationalization and the war danger, upon the necessary "internationalizing" of the working class

by alliance with the colonial independence movements and unity with the revolutionary workers of all lands. It must struggle against every tendency to adjust itself to "prosperity" of American imperialism.

These are the two perspectives which are struggling for mastery of the American Party. The first perspective is represented by the present Majority (Lovestone-Pepper); the second perspective is that of the Minority (Bittelman, Johnstone, Foster, Zack, Browder, Dunne). Under pressure of C. I. criticism the Lovestone-Pepper Majority has greatly modified the expressions of its line, but it still stubbornly clings to its essential features, striving to hide them under a cloak of phrases, to conceal them in lengthy, interminable documents, while it conducts the sharpest kind of factional struggle against the Minority which raised the issue of the Right danger, and which has been fighting for a line in America closer to that of the C. I.

The Weaknesses of the Minority.

Although the Minority has been conducting during 1928 an essentially correct struggle within the American Party, still it would be wrong to use this fact to avoid discussion of the weaknesses of the Minority. Equally incorrect would it be to speak only of the strong points of the Minority, which are generally well known in the C. I.

(Such as its proletarian character, contrasted with the intellectualist-artistic composition of the Lovestone-Pepper leadership; its long experience in the American class-struggle, contrasted with the Lovestone-Pepper group, most of which graduated from the colleges and universities into the Central Committee of the Party; its "American" origin and base in the movement, contrasted with the "foreign-language group" origin and base of the Lovestone-Pepper group; etc., etc.)

For the Minority at present, a very searching self-criticism will be of much more value than constantly to boast about its strong points. It also has its weak points, and unless these are relentlessly searched out and energetically overcome, the Minority cannot effectively fulfill its function as the nucleus for a Bolshevik, stable leadership around which the American Party can be unified.

What are some of these weaknesses? A few of the most important of these may be listed as follows:

1. Lack of a coherent, clarified

line of policy extending over a period the leading elements of the Minority. During 1926-1927 the Minority itself was engulfed in the swamp of opportunism in which the whole Party of years, generally accepted by all labored, and therefore its half-blind struggles within the Party took on the appearance of unprincipled factionalism, although in reality they were rather the expression of lack of political maturity.

2. Lack of a thoroughly homogeneous character. It is not an accident, but rather one expression of a serious political weakness in the Minority, that Cannon could have been one of its leading members right up to the moment when he decided to openly declare his Trotskyism. To attempt from this, as Lovestone does, to infer a fundamental Trotskyist tendency to the Minority, is only factional slander; but its true significance must not be evaded by the Minority, which is, that the Minority has not been sufficiently concentrated upon the necessity of advancing to leading positions only those elements who manifestly contribute to a homogeneous, stable leadership. Cannon's Trotskyism was a secret until October, but it was no secret to the Minority that Cannon was very unstable, that he had been an element of instability in Party leadership for years, that his chief capacity has always been for suddenly changing camps, and for maneuvering between groups; and yet, in spite of this knowledge, the Minority took Cannon into its leadership, nominated him onto the Program Commission of the Sixth Congress and proposed him for even higher posts. This reflects a lack of thorough, searching self-analysis and self-criticism within the Minority which it must certainly overcome before it can be considered a satisfactory nucleus for the re-constituted leadership of the American Party.

3. Lack of a unified understanding of its own origin and history, not to speak of the origin and history of the Party as a whole. An example of this weakness, and its possible bad effects, is seen in the unification with the Cannon group without a principle understanding on the fundamental issues which in the past had divided it from the Minority.

4. A tendency within the Minority to overemphasize immediate practical results (the obverse side of one of its strong points, namely, its immersion in mass work), sometimes at the expense of its main line. This tendency has been the basis of most of the charges of lack

of principle directed against the Minority.

Why do we, supporters of the Minority, occupy so much time in criticizing the Minority instead of the Majority Lovestone-Pepper leadership?

For two principal reasons: (1) The Lovestone-Pepper group already stands condemned for its political line. (2) It is the special task of the Minority, as the nucleus of the future leadership of the Party, to take up seriously the struggle against its own defects, and to do so in the open before the whole Party and the C. I. This is a contribution in that direction.

The Problem of Trotskyism.

The sudden outbreak of Trotskyism in America, through the channel of Cannon and his friends, has increased the difficulties of the Party for the moment, although eventually it may prove to have been a healthy purgative, ridding the Party of essentially unhealthy elements. Within the Party, Cannon's influence will prove—has proved—very small, and to raise, as Lovestone has done, the cry of danger of a split in the Party, is factional demagoguery directed toward another purpose than the fight against Trotskyism. The danger of Trotskyism, and of Cannon, in America, lies in that with the support of wealthy middle-class liberals it spreads its poison of suspicion and distrust toward the Comintern and toward the Soviet Union among the masses of workers outside of but close to the Party, among those many tens of thousands of workers who follow our leadership in the trade union struggles. It is very easy to obtain an almost unanimous condemnation within the Party of Cannon and Trotskyism, but it is a more difficult and complicated task to overcome the effects of his propaganda among the non-party, left-wing masses.

This phase of the struggle against Trotskyism has been completely brushed aside by the Lovestone-Pepper leadership, in favor of a special interpretation of the Trotskyist danger, invented to fit their own factional needs of the moment. They proclaimed to the Party, that: (1) The only channel open to support the C. I. and the Soviet Union, is through support of the Lovestone-Pepper group. (2) That Trotskyism-Cannonism is "the most consistent and developed system of opportunism" and that it is the "rallying center of opportunism in America both inside and outside the Party." With this program Lovestone has

succeeded in doing the following things:

1. Strengthened Cannon and Trotskyism. Some workers, especially outside the Party, believe Cannon and Lovestone when both of them say the same thing, namely, that Lovestone is the logical representative of C. I. leadership in America, and judging the C. I. from what they know of Lovestone (who is concrete and near to them) they turn against the C. I. leadership.

2. Turned the attention of the Party away from the real Right wing danger, which finds its base not in Trotskyism but in the reformist-trade-unionism of America; thereby Lovestone-Pepper hope to escape the examination of their own specific Right wing theories and line.

3. Within the Party, mobilized their supporters on the assumption that the Minority as disguised Trotskyists, and at the same time embody the Right danger for the American Party.

4. Created a sad confusion among the membership, and especially among the non-Party sympathizers, by their metaphysical juggling with the categories of "Left" and "Right," in order to substantiate their factional strategy.

It is perhaps in its handling of the Trotskyist problem in America that the Lovestone-Pepper group has the most crassly revealed its essentially opportunist-adventurist features for all to see who care to, throughout the world as well as in America. America, after all, is still largely unknown to most Parties of the Comintern, and the C. I. leadership itself is only too well aware of the insufficiency of our present knowledge and analysis of the American problems. But Trotskyism is an old and familiar problem by now to all, and the Lovestone-Pepper mishandling of this issue, from obvious factional considerations, stands out of the American scene like a mountain, clear and unescapable.

In spite of incidental errors, quickly corrected (such as the echo of Lovestone-Pepper theory in the Oct. 16 statement), the Minority has contributed much to make the struggle against Trotskyism a real ideological struggle (as well as an organizational one to break all its holds on our movement), to raise the political level of the Party, and to combat its influence among the non-Party masses. It has completely smashed the legend, so comfortable for Cannon and Trotskyists the world over, that in America only Lovestone-Pepper provide the means to support the C. I. and Soviet

Union. It will continue the struggle to the final liquidation of Trotskyism as an influence among the American workers.

For the Line of the Sixth Congress

The Minority in the American Party believes that its struggle before and after the Sixth Congress is essentially a struggle for the line of the C. I., and especially a struggle for the application of the Sixth Congress line to America without reservations. While the Minority at the Sixth Congress expressed its disappointment that the door was not closed finally upon the theory of American "exceptionalism" in the Congress resolutions, but only by implication, while Lovestone-Pepper were allowed unchallenged to claim the Congress decisions as C. I. support for their theories and practices in America, yet the Minority was then and since, not expressing reservations to the line of the Sixth Congress but on the contrary demanding the full application of the line to America. The Lovestone-Pepper group, on the contrary, has not corrected its line in the light of the Sixth Congress. It has repeated its former errors in ever more gross forms, restating its theory of American "exceptionalism," surrendering to the craft ideology of the Right wing elements in the garment trades, continuing its support and protection to the Right wing in the co-operatives placing Right wing elements in control of the anti-imperialist work etc., etc. Its concessions to the Sixth Congress line have been purely formal, and of the nature of mechanical repetition of phrases, but have not touched the practical work of the Party. In the most impermissible manner they have made a factional football of the Trotskyist issue. They have convinced very many responsible comrades, who at the time of the Sixth Congress were still in doubt, of the opportunist and adventurist nature of their leadership of the American Party.

In the light of all these facts, the coming Party Congress must definitely liquidate these Right wing elements in its leadership by placing them in a minority, by placing the Party condemnation upon their theories, by revivifying the Party leadership with new proletarian elements around the nucleus of the present Minority. Upon the basis of a corrected line, and with the assistance of the Comintern, the two large groupings into which the Party is now divided, must be fused together into a united, solidified Party fully determined to complete its process of Bolshevization, and to lead the American working class through all its partial struggles, over all its immense difficulties, to the conquest of power over American imperialism.