

New Program of the C. P. L. A.

by Herbert Zam

The Conference for Progressive Labor Action (C.P.L.A.), generally known as the Muste group, started, as the name implies, as essentially a progressive movement in the trade unions. In the last year or so, however, the C.P.L.A. has been changing into a basically political organization. Today it bears a dual character—that of a progressive wing in the trade unions and that of the nucleus for a new political party. The program recently adopted by the C.P.L.A. reflects this condition. While the new program has in no way strengthened the trade union aspect of the C.P.L.A.'s principles, it shows a tremendous confusion on essentials and the concrete proposals are also very meager, certainly much less clear and definite than when they constituted the bulk of the C.P.L.A. program.

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The Program of Action

The C.P.L.A. program of action includes six points: organize the unorganized, against the trade union bureaucrats, for progressive trade unionism, for independent political action thru a Labor party, for workers education, and for labor unity. But these six points do not by any means exhaust the immediate problems confronting the American workers. Thus, for example, there is nothing said about the burning question of the time, unemployment, except that the trade unions should fight, among other

things, for "a nation-wide system of social insurance against the risks of accident, death and unemployment..." And this point is itself a very minor item in one of the six main points. This is enough to show the meagerness of the immediate action which the C.P.L.A. urges upon the labor movement.

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On Capitalism and Socialism

With regard to the general political considerations, the C.P.L.A. program is surely the worst of any group claiming to be "left". The C.P.L.A. claims to be more to the left than the Socialist party, but it is very difficult to find this leftness in its program. The program is much worse than the pretty bad program of the S.P. "Militants," in spite of the claim of kinship between the two. Let us examine some of the points.

The C.P.L.A. program declares it stands against capitalism, but it does not even mention the word **Socialism**. It says nothing as to whether it believes that capitalism will be followed by a socialist society as the next stage in the development of productive relations. Instead, we are told to substitute "a workers republic with planned economy." Is this workers republic to be a transition to socialism, that is, will it be a proletarian dictatorship? Not according to the program! The program conceives the "workers republic" as the next social

system after capitalism. What sort of a republic will it be? Will it be based on the parliamentary system? Will it be based on soviets? Will it have some other form? The program does not say. What will be the class relations in this workers republic? Will there be classes? Will the capitalist class be expropriated? If not, how are we to get into possession of the means of production? There is no answer here. The program speaks of the disappearance of "senseless class distinctions." What sort of language is this? This represents a utopian attitude toward the capitalist system, a Rosseauistic attitude, but not a Marxian attitude. It typifies the kind of analysis the program makes of the capitalist system. No understanding as to its origin and evolution; no examination of its internal contradictions and its inevitable downfall; it is just "senseless."

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On the Workers Republic

While emphasizing many times that it wants a "workers republic," that is, a form of state dominated by the workers, the C.P.L.A. program, nevertheless, declares that "democracy will be a reality" and the "system will be operated in the interests of all." Now it is obvious that if the system is operated in the interests of all, and if there is real democracy, then it cannot be a workers republic, in which there is democracy only for the workers and which is operated in the interests of the workers only; while only under socialism, which grows out of the proletarian dictatorship (workers republic), is there any real equality, but then there are no longer any classes, working class either. The amazing confusion of the program is obvious.

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On the Soviet Union

The attitude toward the Soviet Union as expressed in the program also leaves much to be desired. There is nothing in the paragraph to which an extreme right-wing Socialist, or a liberal, could not subscribe. The Russian revolution was the "great turning point in modern history"—to say this is merely to state an historical fact; it does not express an attitude toward it. And to "stand for vigorous defense of the Soviet regime" says only a little more. Again there is no attitude expressed. It is possible to stand for the defense of a country against imperialism without believing in its social system (example—Nicaragua, Morocco, etc.). This attitude we expect of half-baked liberals, but of "revolutionists" we expect that they declare themselves, that they have an attitude, a political estimation of the Soviet Union, and not merely an expression of friendship.

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On Internationalism

The C.P.L.A. program declares that the "labor movement must be international" and refuses to say anything else. What International? And what labor movement? Are you referring to a political international? Then there are two, the Socialist and the Communist. You stand with one or the other, or you can propose organizing a third. In any case, you must state your attitude to these three propositions. If you don't, then you had better not say anything at all about labor's "internationalism."

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It must not be supposed that the above few remarks exhaust the shortcomings of the C.P.L.A. program. By no means! They are merely samples of the general appearance of this program. It is a compound of confusion, ignorance and political cowardice. The program indicates that the C.P.L.A. can obviously not live very long in its present state. It will have to change. If it changes in the direction of its original aims, it might become a factor in re-orientating the labor movement. If it continues in the line indicated by the present program, it will either disintegrate or be swallowed up by the S.P., the only organization which can absorb the C.P.L.A. program and not die of ptomaine poisoning.

Problems Of Socialist Construction

PIECE-WORK IN THE SOVIET UNION

by L. Kaufman (Moscow)

Among the measures taken last year for the elimination of the equalization in wages the progressive piece-rate system takes an important place. The essence of this form of wages, generally speaking, consists in paying higher prices for each unit of production in excess of the set norm. If, for instance, ten units of a shift are paid 55 kopeks, then the price for the eleventh detail will be from, let us say, 57 kopeks; the twelfth, sixty, etc.

In Soviet enterprises this progressive piecework system is a method for material encouragement of shock brigade work in industry, a method of coordinating a socialist attitude toward work with material interest in the increase of the productivity of labor.

This has already given great results. At the Lisen factory, for instance, four days after the introduction of the progressive piece-work system, a brigade which previously produced not more than 2,000 piston rings, raised its production to 4,500. In the Kolomen factory, the introduction of this system resulted in an increase in production of from 15% to 20%; at the Tula factory No. 1 the change to the new system resulted in a 12% increase in the productivity of labor; in the Ural Machine Building, during the very first months of adopting the progressive piece-work system, the norm for one branch of production was 60% over-fulfilled; in another branch of production, 52%, etc. At the same time the wages of the workers who accepted progressive piece-work rose considerably. At this factory the wages of the workers in some brigades increased from 5 rubles to 7 rubles 56 kopeks per day.

In the reactionary press abroad someone called our progressive piece-work system "Soviet Taylorism". The Taylorists, they said, also reward the workers for the over-fulfilment of their task.

It is not difficult to show the absurdity of this kind of comparison. The Taylor system of wages is reduced to pumping out additional profits from the workers and giving nothing to them in return. Despite the fact that the increased intensity of labor under such a system is ostensibly

compensated by additional income this system is in reality less profitable for the worker than the usual direct piece-work system.

The same may be said about the Halsey system as according to that system the norm is usually set by the best worker, it is obvious that only very few workers can fulfill it.

But it is less profitable for the worker than straight piece-work. The system is only profitable for the manufacturer, who, under the pretense of special reward, is actually paying less than for usual piece-work.

Can this "reward" wage system be in any way compared to our progressive piece-work system in which the workers gets full pay for each unit of production according to piece-work rates, and additional payment for overfulfilment of the norm. The Soviet worker can see clearly how his wages per unit of production increase more and more as a result of the intensity of his labor.

However, we do not reject the Taylor scientific system of the organization of labor. In the socialist economic order a scientifically worked out system of the organization of labor is transformed from a means of exploitation into a lever for the increase of the productivity of labor and, for this reason, into a basis for the improvement of the economic condition of the working class.

Comrade Lenin wrote: "The Taylor system combines subtle brutality of bourgeois exploitation and many rich scientific achievements in the matter of analysis of mechanical movements in labor, the elimination of unnecessary movements, the development of the best working methods, the introduction of the best accounting system, control, etc. The Soviet Republic must adopt all the valuable achievements of science and technique in this field at all costs."

Throwing out of the Taylor system everything which worsens the condition of the worker, everything that cannot apply to the worker in the Soviet Union, to the worker who is owner of the means of production, who is the creator of socialism, we do not by any means refuse to accept everything which is valuable in the Taylor system of labor organization.