

Letters from Readers



Is Building Slump Really on Us?

Dear Editor:

Most of your writers do very little independent thinking and what they do, is pretty shallow and one-sided.

However there is one writer, George Morris, who I do like. He at least tries to dig for the facts and draw conclusions. What prompts this letter is Morris' article in the Sunday paper discussing the drop in residential building and in auto production. But this gap is plugged by the rise in commercial construction, the recently passed law on road building, the St. Lawrence River Project—all of which will require steel and put people to work.

If you only add up the minus signs in the economy and not the plus signs you're going to be way off the track.



Of course all this prosperity has a weak foundation. It is based on credit or debt. But as long as a man has money coming in and he can maneuver a bit, he can meet his payments on the installment plan. Eventually, of course, a point of no return is reached—where the debt is so high and prices so high that wages cannot keep within reach of prices.

But we're not near such a point yet.

Far from it. Yet the party has based itself for all these years on the theory of imminent depression in the face of contrary economic facts.

The result is that your program must constantly be pushed further and further down the economic scale. You must continually seek support of the poorest, the most underprivileged.

Now I'm not saying that you should not have a program for these groups but you offer nothing to anybody else—the skilled and semi-skilled. And they have many problems, too!

Oh well, here's a couple of bucks just to be able to read George Morris. Give him a chance to express himself.

G. L.

Stories Should Tell Of Socialism's Value

Dear Editor:

Just what do I mean when I say that we should bring socialism, a socialist program, forward in our daily struggles?

1. In The Worker, July 15, 1956, Joseph North wrote a fine article on "Kidnapping poses some anguished questioning." He gave a review of the anguish of the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Weinberger of the loss of their little son. North presented a problem that faces every American family, a danger that confronts par-

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The American Road to Socialism

A Special Section Devoted to Discussion of the Past and Perspectives of the Communist Party and the American Left. Edited by Discussion Committee, Communist Party

A Political Argument in a Personal Vein

By FRANK CARLSON

ABOUT A WEEK ago I had decided to write an article entitled "Hold the Line." Why? Because (1) I was disturbed by the way comrades were walking around with blank stares, muttering under their breath; (2) I was a "leader" a member of the county board, and (3) the time had come for me to fulfill my responsibility, and "act" like a leader by pulling out my soapbox and delivering a good rousing pep talk that would set everything right.

Today I can say, how silly, how presumptuous! Why? (1) Because at the time I was going to write the article I, too, was staring blankly and muttering to myself and I'm still muttering; (2) because the times call for more than saying and doing the things that are usually "expected" of us, and (3) because, just as continuous breast beating and wailing will not set things right, neither will smug pep-talks, and business as usual approaches.

Let's face it. We've been hit hard. The attacks on us during the cold war, the Khrushchev revelations, the bringing to light of our own stupidities and errors have got us reeling. Perhaps I'm being presumptuous by saying "us," so let me talk for myself.

I was upset when I read the latest Khrushchev report. Two evenings later I found myself delivering a two-hour talk to lift the spirits of my good comrade, Lil. Two evenings following, my good comrade found it necessary to give me a two-hour talk to buoy up my spirits.

START AT BEGINNING

I DON'T KNOW what's happening in other households. I have a hunch. What goes on at meetings, I am sure, hardly reflects what is going in on the hearts and minds of many of our comrades these days. If, let us say, Comrades Foster, Dennis, Schneiderman are not reeling. I'd like to know why not. Maybe they have something I don't have, I'd like them to impart it to me. Maybe they lack something they ought to have. It should be imparted to them.

We are now discussing incorrect past "estimates." Let's try to estimate this one correctly, otherwise we will be prescribing an aspirin where major surgery is needed—on the Party and each of us as an individual.

The problem, in my opinion, is so serious that we almost have to start from fundamentals. We have to convince ourselves that no matter what goes on in the rest of the world we, as Americans can't sidestep the class struggle, that the ultimate solution lies in socialism, that only the working class can transform society, that the working class needs a political party of socialism, that this has to be a party that is understood and accepted by American workers, that we have to help build it.

SOME QUESTIONS

CAN WE TRANSFORM our party or shall we orientate on building something new? Can we be effective in building something new without, as a preliminary, transforming our party and ourselves? How can we transform ourselves? Do we have it within ourselves or are we so far gone that it is hopeless—and the job will have to be done by others than ourselves?

Some weeks ago, this committee announced the opening of a public discussion on the report of Comrades Eugene Dennis, and Claude Lightfoot and Max Weiss to the National Committee of the CPUSA and urged the fullest participation of all Party members and organizations.

In this issue we continue to print articles that have been received.

The discussion now being initiated is, of course, not entirely new. For some time now, there has been intense debate in the

ranks of the Party on all phases of our work. A profound process of re-examination is going on. There are differences of opinion within our ranks on a whole host of questions. There is nothing alarming about this. For only an open, frank and vigorous discussion in which every member honestly and frankly states his or her position, can guarantee that we will emerge with a stronger party and one more capable of truly serving and advancing the welfare of

the American people and the cause of Socialism.

We trust that this discussion will mark a new stage; in that it will help further deepen our understanding of the past, both in its positive and negative feature, as well as increasingly bring forth much more thinking with regard to future perspectives.

We urge upon everyone fullest participation in this discussion.

DISCUSSION COMMITTEE
COMMUNIST PARTY

Statement of the Committee

make it?" She answered after a long pause, "I don't know, I don't know." Then she threw the question back at me. My pause was even longer.

Then I said that I thought we could, providing: that we don't view what we are going through as just another "discussion period" after which we go back to business as usual; that we make up our minds to make a fight for it and not give up before trying; that the shock treatment we have been getting causes us all to stop thinking and acting like soldiers in an army and to start thinking and acting like members of the general staff; that we don't stop half way in carrying through all the corrective measures necessary to ensure that the party membership as a whole will be able to make its imprint on program and policies; that we approach the problem realistically, with the understanding that the transformation will involve a long, hard struggle and that we do not try to get rich quick.

When I finished the comrade said: "I don't know. I don't know."

Since the conversation I have been asking myself whether I had expressed my real feelings or was I giving out with a pep talk in my capacity as representative of "the county."

I BELIEVE SO

I BELIEVE I can answer that one. I have confidence that we can make it—that we will pull through our present difficulties and play an honorable role in guaranteeing that our working class will have a Marxist party at its head; indigenous and capable of leading the working class and its allies in struggle.

Just as I have confidence that the resurgence of mass participation in the affairs of the Soviet Union and the Soviet party will continue to set things to rights over there, so do I have confidence that the collective

strength, wisdom and will of our party membership will set us back on the high road here. I include our party leaders when I speak of the membership.

Do we have the strength and will? I believe we do. We found the strength and determination within ourselves to stand up in the face of many difficulties, setbacks, attacks in the past.

Do we have the wisdom? That's more difficult to answer. I believe we can acquire the wisdom if we draw proper conclusions from past experience, if we apply ourselves to mastering the scientific Marxist method rather than the word.

Can we bring forward a strengthened leadership? Yes, if we change our concepts of leadership from one built around a few full-time functionaries to one that is based on the direct involvement in policy-making of our most effective shop and mass workers.

Do we have the benefit of the life-giving substance that comes from mass contact? Yes. Despite our general political isolation and loss of influence, more of our members are in live contact with non-left people than has been true for any time during at least the last five years.

And we have the beginnings, and must develop further, the type of atmosphere within our ranks which will give full reign to creative thinking and work.

I'LL BE QUITE frank to admit that I'm short of answers to many, if not most of the problems before us. The test for all of us in the coming months will be our ability to come up with answers. I have no quarrel with the general estimate of our past contained in the Dennis report. For me, at any rate, life has seemed to confirm the correctness of the analysis.

What worries me is how we take it from here. And, especially, how we can guarantee that, alongside of our internal discussion, we take advantage of the opportunities of the election campaign to strengthen our mass ties and influence.



FRANK CARLSON

By whom will it be done if not by us? If not by us alone, then who together with us?

Questions, questions, questions. They cannot be sidestepped. They cannot be answered by simply coming to agreement on what was wrong with us in the past. If there is no confidence that we can do anything about the future, what value is there in discussing the past? These questions, I know, are present in many of our minds. They are not always placed on the table. We have to drag them out from the recesses of our minds, and discuss them without feeling as though we are betraying the working-class by even raising them. For unless we can reestablish in our own minds some measure of confidence in ourselves, in the party, in our ability to change sufficiently to be able to influence the future course of events, then there is no point in discussing past mistakes.

CAN WE MAKE IT?

TWO DAYS AGO I asked a comrade, "Do you think we'll

WILLIAMSBURG RESOLUTION

AT A Section Committee Meeting of the Williamsburg organization we agreed to the following:

Deep concern for the latest conviction of our comrades and willingness to do what has to be done to stop all further convictions, arrests, and amnesty for all those convicted and/or jailed. We pledged our support to whatever has to be done to guarantee the above.

We also felt concerned with the fact that the National Committee has not as yet entered the searching discussion going down below in relation to our Party.

The essence of our discussion on this point at our meeting was that we wanted, as soon as possible, to get all the opinions of all the members of our National Committee and all differences. We feel that this would be of tremendous help at this time.

—WMSBG. SECT. COMM.
B'KLYN.

(Similar resolutions have been received from the section organizers of the New York County Party organization, the Kew-Pomonok Section (Queens), the Clearview Section (Queens), and the section organizers and county staff of Brooklyn. — Discussion Committee.)



Letters from Readers

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ents throughout the world—outside of the Soviet Union. North should have pointed out to the Weinbergs that in a socialist society there would be no incentive to kidnap.

2. The same writer in the issue of July 29, presents an equally good article on the so-called death march trial of a drill sergeant. But North failed to point out why about 50 percent of American youth can't swim. He didn't have an answer, or at least he didn't give one.

3. I always enjoy George Morris' articles, but pull my hair when he stops short of an answer to the problems he presents. He asks, in the July 29 issue of *The Worker*, "Is this the twilight of the building boom?" What would be the answer in a socialist economy? He doesn't say.

A. R. W.

The Right To Read

Editor, *Daily Worker*:

I wish to tell you that I appreciate the 'talk around,' but I want to add that I like to 'read around.'

In my 'read around,' I am willing to read all the daily newspapers, magazines and periodicals. I read the "Progressive," published in Madison Wisconsin (once the magazine of Bob LaFollette Sr.), whose editor, Morris Rubin, wrote recently in the *New York Post* about his visit to Soviet Russia.



Also, "Commonweal," "The Catholic Worker," "Fellowship," "Friends Committee on National Legislation," "The Socialist Call," "The Weekly People," "Civil Liberties," of the ACLU; many periodicals from Conservation societies, like the Wilderness Society, the Audubon Society, Save the Redwood Trees League and Nature Conservation Society — all dedicated to protecting forests and nature's gifts from destruction.

Now, I want to ask one question.

Does this make me a fellow traveler against the traditions of the U.S. Constitution?—H.F.

Chicago Member Wants His Expulsion Reviewed

CHICAGO.

The first guarantee of inner-party democracy in the future is to pin down the general criticism to cases and fix responsibility for past errors.

In 1948 I was expelled from the party and publicly condemned in the *Sunday Worker* as an "enemy of the party and working class." Although I was later re-admitted and am now working actively in industry, I feel my expulsion should be reviewed because it was typical of the methods whereby we slipped into bureaucratic habits.

My misdeeds were criticism of the district organizer and the expression of differences over tactical approaches. These criticisms were always made openly either in district committee meetings or directly to the district organizer. I never indulged in any factional activity against him, but always defended the (Continued on Page 10)

The American Road to Socialism

Crossroads to Which We Have Come

By BILL NORMAN

The Communist Party, our party, is in a crisis. Since 1945, our party has suffered a sharp decline in membership. Similarly, we have suffered a catastrophic decline in mass influence. Above all, we are in the throes of a theoretical crisis, requiring a new look at all our past theoretical concepts and their application to American specific conditions.

It has been argued that the Communist Party is in a critical situation, but not in a crisis. I, who bear a heavy share of the responsibility for the situation in which the party finds itself today as a result of a decade of left-sectarian errors, believe we are in a crisis, a deep crisis.

In fact, I believe our party stands today at the crossroads. The two alternatives confronting it are recovery and growth—or deterioration into a sect and oblivion. There is as yet no certainty that our party has been stabilized at a certain level, where we can look forward to a gain in membership, mass influence, or unified approach to basic theoretical questions.

Can Resolve Crisis

On the contrary, we must look forward to a still further decline in membership and mass influence and a difficult ideological struggle before we succeed in establishing a common theoretical and political line, leading to the maximum unification of our party.

It is my opinion that the crisis confronting our party can be resolved in favor of an eventual stabilization, recovery and growth on all these fronts.

However, this requires a more serious realization by all of us that such a crisis does in fact exist, that we adopt a more self-critical attitude to our past mistakes and that we acknowledge more seriously a certain lack of confidence in the national leadership.

Those who argue against the concept of a crisis in the party do so on the claim that no irreconcilable trends exist in our party. Firstly, in my opinion, this will be established only after a most difficult ideological struggle. Secondly, though true in the long run, this statement tends to slur over the varied theoretical and political currents in our party today. I believe there are three main currents.

First, there is the current which tends to minimize the decade of left-sectarian errors committed by the party. This tends to tip its hat to the errors, emphasizes only the achievements and sees as the main danger in the party today the return to Browderite ideology. A variation of this current attributes the isolation of the party, not to the left-sectarian errors but to predominantly right opportunist mistakes committed in the last decade.

Second Current

Secondly, there is the current which asserts that the party and its leadership has been totally discredited and compromised in



Can't sign. I have my hands full.

—Boris Yefimov in *New Times*

the eyes of the membership and the masses; that the party leadership, as constituted today, is either incapable or unwilling to make the necessary changes required to move our party out of its isolation; and that our party has no future on the American scene.

The third current asserts that our party has a future in further contributing to the struggles and welfare of the American people and in helping to realize a broad, mass party of socialism in the U. S. To realize this perspective, however, the party must make drastic revisions, above all, in its character and structure. It must boldly free



WILLIAM NORMAN

itself from the fetters of dogmatic adherence to any political line which can be misconstrued as not reflecting the national interests of the American working class and people. This must be done to enhance and not weaken conviction in the cause of socialism; to enhance and not weaken the bond of international solidarity; to enhance and not weaken the equality of fraternal relations between Communist parties of different countries.

This last current further holds that the party must move boldly on the path of an independent American party of scientific socialism; that we begin to apply ONLY those theories which are universally valid today in the teachings of the best thinkers of scientific socialism and in a way that fits the specific conditions of the United States; that we fight vigorously to remove the label of foreign agent from the party, which, though it never had any foundation in truth, the trusts and monopoly press have

nevertheless been successful in pinning on us.

There is a variation of this current also. While in most respects setting forth similar propositions, it considers the bold approach to be too extreme. Its hesitancy and timidity tend to put a brake on self-criticism, on the objective of an independent party of scientific socialism and on the development of creative Marxism.

In my opinion, the third current will prove to be dominant in the party, the one most likely to unify our party and put it back on the road to increased growth and influence among the masses.

The crisis in our party did not develop as a result of irreconcilable differences. On the contrary, it developed as a result of unanimity on common line, resting on a weak theoretical foundation, replete with left-sectarian errors.

The crisis can be overcome only as a result of a common line, based on correct theoretical foundations and correct tactics and policies, politically and organizationally.

Past Line Not Sound

It has been argued in some sections of the party that while we committed a host of tactical errors in the past decade, we nevertheless had a fundamental-

More Democracy in Clubs

IN RECENT discussions in our section concerning the primary campaign in the 10th C. D. in Brooklyn, both privately and at two enlarged section meetings, certain points of view were expressed so frequently that they must be typical of a large percentage of the comrades involved. Briefly:

First, it was felt that the county leaders, in planning and initiating their policy on the campaign had acted in a bureaucratic manner. Section opinion had not been sought—in fact had been ignored in a manner only too typical of our Party in recent years. This lack of inner party democracy demonstrated itself further in the course of the campaign and resulted in confusion and inefficiency, due to ignoring of the experiences of people closest to the situation. Furthermore it resulted in a "staying away" on the part of many comrades.

Secondly it was felt that left-sectarian errors had been com-

mitted, in that the main appeal to the voters in this C.D., which is 80 percent white, had been of a Negro nationalist nature. Very little material had been directed to the white voters. The stress had been on the need for Negro representation, ignoring many of the actual issues which exist within the community.

Only two meetings have been held so far in our section on this matter. The first, at which the county leadership presented their views, did not allow enough time for all to express themselves and a second meeting was called. At the second, there were no supporters present for the county report and so the discussion was "one-sided." Future meetings at which all points of view can be aired are eagerly anticipated.

Many comrades want to see a "party of a new type" and believe it can be achieved only by resolving each situation as it arises—down below in the sections and clubs. Besides as usual can only lead us to a dead end.



POSITIONS OF STRENGTH
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elected leadership before the membership.

For doing this I was found guilty of "aiding the FBI." Using me as a scapegoat must have given considerable aid to two real FBI agents in the district board, who were only exposed several years later when they turned up as professional government witnesses.

My case is one example of the practice of suppressing legitimate, non-factional criticism and opinion by disciplinary methods; of using the personal weaknesses of the critic as an excuse to dismiss the criticism.

I am officially requesting that the district in question review the case and clear my record because the rectification of concrete mistakes is necessary to restore the confidence of the membership that we really mean what we say this time.

Max Weiss, in his report, proposes that we "re-discover America." Of course this is a good idea. But crowing over it like a child with a new top would indicate that the leadership is not yet attuned to our most valuable asset—that part of our membership which discovered America quite a while back. When repression came, not all our members gave up the ship or became sectarians.

Some settled down for the long pull in their shops and communities. They are still waiting for the leadership to come and share their discoveries with them. A.

On U.S. Marines And Sergeant McKeon

BROOKLYN.

Dear Editor:

As a constant reader and enthusiastic supporter of Joseph North's column, I was somewhat disappointed in what I thought was a too genteel treatment of the Marine Sergeant McKeon. While I most certainly agree that the whole militaristic system of which the Marines are probably the most brutal is the main culprit, nevertheless, even within



that system there is still the possibility for a non-com or an officer to be other than a complete heel.

I have been genuinely alarmed by the treatment given the trial at Parris Island and that the press may well save Sgt. McKeon from serving even the mild sentence that is possible for his actions which brought about the death of six recruits. At the most he would have to serve a little better than six years—what is that, one-year punishment for each of the deaths he caused? That's getting off awfully easy.

Apart from the drinking involved, the racist thinking as exemplified in McKeon's comment about one Italian-American recruit reflect the generally low estimate military career men have for the people under their command.

As for Emile Zola Berman, if he is so concerned about saving military personnel from victimization from the system which is the real criminal, let him at the conclusion of the current Parris Island trial, go to Munich, Germany, to appeal the sentence of an 18-year-old Negro GI who was just sentenced to 40 years of

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The American Road to Socialism

Let's Listen to Workers in the Shops

By Los Angeles Trade Unionist

IT ISN'T enough to blame "Left-sectarianism" for our errors and present isolation in trade union work. What is meant by Left-sectarianism, and what are the mistakes we made, and what should we do to prevent their being made again? In my opinion these wrong practices and errors go back a good many years, all the way back to 1946 when we set up our shop and industrial clubs following the 1945 convention.

Almost at once we began adopting program and policies for the workers in the shops — without their knowledge of course — and attempted to force this program onto the union. Almost overnight the enemy of the working class became the "Social Democratic" and "middle of the road" union leadership. We were pretty good at calling names. All of those who opposed us were called "phonies" and "finks."

Carrying out this same strategy and using the same tactics, we entered such campaigns as the 1948 Presidential election and tried to get the unions to endorse the "Third Party." We refused to see the handwriting on the wall in November, 1948 and continued on in the same old way. We made an issue out of the Marshall Plan and got ourselves further isolated from the rank and file. All the time the real enemy was the same as it had been for years—the company—but we were too busy fighting the union leadership. The workers wanted bread and butter and weren't interested in the Third Party, Marshall Plan, or other such issues, which we blindly continued to champion, getting further and further away from the rank and file.

A 1950 EXPERIENCE

IN 1950, during a lengthy strike in one of the basic industries, some of our comrades really learned to do rank and file work and found themselves held in great respect by their fellow workers for the job they were doing for the union in its struggle. All this good work was thrown out the window, however, when, at the meeting called to announce the strike settlement, spokesmen for the Left branded the settlement a "sell-out." Needless to say, this served to completely separate us from the rank and file whom we had so glibly taken for granted. We completely failed to understand that after more than 100 days out on strike, the workers wanted to return to work and were in no mood to continue the strike any longer.

Again in 1950, at the outbreak of the Korean war, we completely underestimated the mood and sentiment of the workers and in some cases openly and brazenly flaunted their "patriotic" sentiments to their face. It was the direct result of acts on the part of certain comrades that fascist violence took place against the Left in at least one of the shops.

Following this period, many of us who were working in the shops each day and close to the workers began to realize that our tactics and methods were incorrect, and then began a period of retrenchment. Needless to say, this realization of tactical errors was not entirely concurred in by many of those in leadership in the Party here in L. A.—especially on the division level and we continued to commit errors.

Early in 1951, when the National Negro Labor Council was formed, we used our influence



to induce many rank and file trade unionists and some union leaders to sign a public endorsement of the organization. A move which resulted in their being harrassed by management in their respective places of work, threatened with the loss of their jobs, and in some cases their being removed from union leadership by action of their International officers. These events caused a rupture in our relationship with these forces, and in many cases it has not been repaired to this day.

ABSENT LEADERS

In the case of one branch of the industrial setup, the entire section was abandoned by the top leadership for a period of nearly two years. It only managed to hold itself together as a Party organization through the self-discipline of its membership, which continued to meet and pay dues regularly, even though the organization had no contact with any body from a division level on up for at least two years—during which time a national convention of the union involved was held and a great many problems arose in which the left forces could have played a much more dominant role if they had been getting the kind of leader-

ship they should have been getting.

Later, when the leadership which had left in 1951 returned, in many cases it was immediately placed in charge of the work again despite long lack of contact. In many cases, without regard for the problems of the comrades involved, drastic changes were made in the club and section leadership mainly on the insistence of the "returned" leaders who very bureaucratically demanded the changes with little or no discussion. In some cases the comrades who were removed without sufficient explanation became very bitter and withdrawn; in some cases the comrades practically dropped out of all Party activity for a long period following the action.

It must be recognized that the situation in the Party was such that many of those who were not fully in accord with the proposed changes did not feel free to express their opposition. The changes were made in every case to "correct" a situation in which the Party apparently was not growing—in nearly every case it was some "individual" who was held to be responsible for the lack of growth or for the

failure of the program to take hold. At no time was it considered that the program might be wrong or that the objective situation growing out of our past errors could be a possible cause — no, individuals had to be changed, but always on a club or section level—the bureaucratic division leadership remained the same.

SHOP WORKERS AS LEADERS

These are the kinds of Left-sectarian mistakes I think we are talking about. These are the things I think we must agree were wrong. If we can come to a common understanding as to what our errors were, we can and will begin to make advances. In the past, when we tried to discuss our work, every comrade who spoke on errors and weaknesses always justified those mistakes by saying, "but at the same time certain positive things were accomplished." In truth, each evaluation showed that the errors were offsetting the gains and we were slipping further and further into isolation. I don't think that the errors of the past can be glossed over. It is because of them that we have to spend time on this discussion today, and once and for all we have to root them out and take steps to guarantee that they won't be made again.

In my opinion, one of the things which has to come out of this discussion period is a guarantee that active shop workers are made a functioning part of division, county, and state leadership bodies. Ways must be found by which those comrades who are closest to the point of production (and consequently, exploitation) have a voice in the setting of policy in which they have the most to lose if the decisions are incorrect.

We must make our leading bodies, especially section and division, collective organizations and end once and for all any further one-man leadership bodies. In this regard I think our whole concept of democratic centralism has to be overhauled. We have had far too much centralism and too little democracy.

I think that we must maintain our present shop and industrial club setup. It is absolutely essential that our union forces be closely related and not scattered in different organizations all over the county. Despite our past mistakes we cannot now make the mistake of "throwing out the baby with the bath water."

At the Crossroads

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it of a right or left character, while pursuing in the main a sound political line. But it is not possible to commit a whole series of tactical errors, all of a left-sectarian character and over a whole decade, without bringing the soundness of the main line itself into question.

It is true that in the post-war period we sounded the warning to the American people of the danger of war and of the danger that U. S. monopoly capitalism is bent on imperialist world domination. This was a great contribution by our party to the struggle of the American people for peace.

Saw War Imminent

But when we began to see war around the corner every Monday and Tuesday, thus thinking the only solution to be a last stand by the left forces, casting coalition and united front

tactics to the wind, with the end result of our isolation from the masses, then it definitely distorted and to a certain extent nullified the soundness of our main line on the war danger. Nor did our left-sectarian errors aid us in fighting certain right errors on the war danger in some sections of the party. The contrary is true.

It is likewise true that in the post-war period we sounded the warning to the American people on the fascist danger. This was similarly a great contribution by our party in the struggle for peace and against monopoly reaction.

But when we began to see fascism around the corner every Wednesday and Thursday and failed for some time to see the full significance of the anti-McCarthy movement and lagged behind it; when we tended to place self-imposed restrictions on the

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hard labor and dishonorable discharge as an outgrowth of an incident in which no one was killed although many were injured. (See Reuters news item which appeared in the New York Times).

W. F.

'Vanguard Claim Separates CP'

NEW YORK

Dear Editor:

In his article "The Only Danger" Jim West notes: "the problem of how to realize the vanguard role of the Party of Socialism."

To believe in human life, to have grasped the meaning of dialectical materialism, to accept the principle of democratic centralism and the method of disciplined, united struggle is one thing. To claim on this basis the role of vanguard is it seems to me unnecessary, unwise, and not literally correct.

Communist theory and practice grow and evolve as does man himself, and they are likewise liable to error. No man or group can have all the answers. I think the greatest mistake of the CPUSA in the past has been the tendency to put too great faith in its own infallibility, thus alienating itself from the rest who are behind. And that the solution is to aim rather at being an integral part of the mainstream of the country's life, emphasizing the necessity to contribute rather than the duty to lead, without sacrifice of principles. If their line is correct, leadership will follow of its own accord.

The future of the Party is of deepest concern to me, and I have wanted for a long time to say what I have said.

-A FRIEND

Pre-Socialist Culture Has Much Good Too

CHICAGO

Dear Editor:

My letter on Ben Levine (7-29-56) was printed with an alteration. It was our "cultural" heritage from pre-Socialist society that I thanked Ben for being so "ably communicative" of. Not our "critical heritage." Let's not be leery of the conception of our cultural heritage from pre-Socialist society. Marx wasn't. It was his idea.

Today (in "Amateurs Among the Airways") Ben sets an example to be imitated, of non-perfunctory, non-maudlin, simply insightful self-criticism. One really should note as well the wit which he writes, almost always a fresh and meaningful wit, not straining for empty cleverness. I think there is no question but that a volume of his best writing must some time be published, when the economic market for fine literature is more nearly what it should be. Much of his writing is that good, and of greater than its more obvious topical interest.

Joseph North's article (7-22-56) on "Spain—20 Years After" was magnificent. In a depth of knowledge of what one is talking about there's an inspiration for which "human sympathy," alone, is no substitute.—W. R.

of certain sections of the leadership is the fact that differences that exist are not being aired before the membership. Many times, starting from a polarization of views, differences find an agreeable resolution in the dialectics of the debate.

But the fact that we have not found a way to air these differences, to indicate how they were resolved, to involve the membership in their resolution, reflects a lack of confidence in the membership and simultaneously prevents the membership from participating most effectively in the discussion.

The American Road to Socialism

At the Crossroads

(Continued from Page 10)

ability of the party to fight for its legality, in addition to those imposed by the trusts—then this was definitely due to the distortion of our main line.

It is no accident that a different times, in different sections of the party, there was a hesitancy to accept the theory of peaceful coexistence. This is because overestimation of the war danger and peaceful coexistence are not fully compatible. It is no accident that at different times, in different sections of the party, there was a hesitancy to accept the theory of the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism. This is because overestimation of the fascist danger and peaceful transition are not fully compatible.

This distortion of our main line accounts for the basic thinking which went into our helping form the third party in 1948, a major cause of our isolation from the trade union movement. This basic thinking began prior to 1948. This type of thinking was, in no small part, responsible for the situation in which the progressive-led unions were expelled from the CIO, for retarding the rejoining of these unions in the mainstream of the labor movement; for creating breaches with the various left-wing forces in the trade unions; for narrowing down the perspectives (although we were by no means solely responsible for the latter) of independent political organizations, like the American Labor Party in New York.

It is thus an over-simplification to merely state that our main line was fundamentally correct.

Errors and Achievements

Another key question being debated in the party is the relationship between our achievements and errors of the past decade. In my opinion, on this question, too, we must guard against the tendency to over-simplification. There is simply no basis in reality to the lament in some sections of the party that a quarter-century of devotion to the party and the cause of socialism has "gone down the drain."

The real truth about our party's achievements is best expressed by the comrade who said: "No one can convince me that my neighborhood and my country are not a better place to live in as a result of my 25 years' membership and activity in the party."

Historically, our party has made many great contributions to the American scene—in the struggle for peace and democracy; in the struggle for Negro rights; in fighting for an anti-depression program; in the struggle for trade union organization; in the struggle for socialist consciousness and eventual socialism in the U. S.; and, in some respects, in the struggle on the theoretical front.

Many of our contributions in various fields have left an indelible imprint on American life. But I also believe that a part of this heritage, accumulated in a quarter of a century of struggle by our party, has been squandered in the past decade as a result of our gross errors. In terms of achievement we have simply not measured up to the historical necessities of the past decade. The attempt to explain this away solely on the grounds of objective factors does not hold water.

Of course, certain objective factors, such as the unprecedented attacks against our party did and still do exist. They played a big role in the decline in our membership and our influence among the masses.

There is no exact parallel to be made between the attacks on the party, on the one hand, and the attacks on the labor movement, on the other. It is a truism that behind the aim of destroying the party was the ultimate objective of crushing the trade unions. However, we did not fully foresee that the trade unions could continue to grow and develop in the McCarthyite atmosphere that existed sharply prior to 1954. Nor did we foresee that if the unions could continue to do so, certain possibilities also existed for our party to put a brake on its losses of membership and influence among the masses.

These were the subjective factors in the situation, and they played a bigger role than the ob-



jective factors, severe as they were. To a great extent our isolation was self-imposed.

There has been a tendency to minimize and balance off our errors with the thought that our party, nevertheless, stood up staunchly and courageously in the face of monopoly reaction's attacks. It is undeniably true that our membership and leaders displayed great courage. This will always remain a bright page in the history of our party. It confirms the idea that conviction in the cause of scientific socialism will always be a source of great courage to the individual.

How much more, then, would this courage have stood out in the minds of the masses, had it been placed in the service of a political line undistorted by so many tactical errors! It is all the more necessary to say this in order to avoid a harmful tendency of the past—the assumption that Communists have a monopoly on sincerity, courage and wisdom.

Browderite Ideology Dead

Still another key position being debated, as we begin to correct our errors of the past, is the extent of Browderite ideological influence in the party. It has been argued in some sections of the party, as well as in certain contributions to the "Speak Your Piece" columns of the Daily Worker, that Browderite influence continues to have a big hold on the party. Those with this view tend to label anyone a Browderite, who, on re-evaluating the period under Browder's leadership, assert that the throwing overboard after 1945 of certain pioneering attempts in the realm of theory and mass policy has proved harmful to the party.

This labelling, in my opinion, is sheer nonsense. It testifies more than anything else could to the deep imprint that the cult of the personality has laid on certain sections of the party. It lends credence to the thought that nothing associated with the whole period under Browder's leadership is of any value to the party; that the annals of this whole period, all the writings and teachings of that period must

Free Exchange of Ideas Will Advance Socialism

By Schenectady Party Member

THE STATED purpose of the Norman Schrank report was to allow the fullest and widest possible discussion in order to formulate a correct policy and to find the proper method of work to advance our country on the road of Socialism.

In order to accomplish this aim, I feel there must be created an atmosphere, at all levels, in which all ideas can be expressed so that in examining them for validity or error, a clarity of perspective can be obtained.

Our Party, in the past, has not operated in this fashion and it now becomes incumbent upon leadership to create this atmosphere for free flow of ideas by all bodies, even if these ideas are erroneous.

I cannot speak for other areas, but this responsibility has not been accepted by those who are

in leadership in our particular area, particularly the regional and state leadership.

An honest exchange of ideas cannot flow freely if comrades feel they are being hammered at, pressure, ridiculed (openly and subtly) and that generally what they think and feel has no merit or worth if it opposes leadership thinking.

Let us remember that the Schrank report is not a policy or line, but a discussion article and as such every comrade has the right to disagree, no matter how sharply, and not become the target for personal slander by leadership.

In my opinion, unless the comrades in leadership correct their approach to discussion around this report and all others, they will succeed in doing what McCarthy and the American imperialists have not been able to do, namely, the dissolution of the Party through loss of those who fought long and hard to keep it alive.

be wiped from the record of the party and assigned to limbo, as they have in the past decade.

Such a theory would attribute to Browder alone the bringing to fruition of certain worthwhile policies and tactics, for which our whole party gave its sweat and blood.

Browderism, far from having a deep hold, cannot get to first base in our party. Browder and the Browder ideology of class harmony and collaboration and progressive and enlightened monopoly capitalism is, in the main, as dead as a door-nail. The Browder revisionism of 1945 is not an issue in the party discussion.

However, there are many lessons to be drawn from the work of our party in the period prior to 1945. Among these are the beginnings and development of tactics of a broad coalition nature and a mass policy, especially in regard to the trade unions; the acceleration of the application of Marxism to specific American conditions and its grounding in American democratic traditions; the beginnings of a new approach to the Negro question (distorted though it was in the Browder period), etc. All these beginnings were in many ways squandered and thrown overboard after 1945.

This is not to say that we did not commit certain left-sectarian errors in the Browder period. There was, for instance, the period of 1939, when, while waging a correct struggle for peace and anti-Hitlerism, there were certain tendencies to divorce ourselves from the anti-fascist sentiments of the people (recall the totally negative approach to the "Bundles for Britain" campaign, the slogan: "The Yanks are not coming," the negative attitude to the emergence of a change in the character of the imperialist war).

Neither is this to say that we did not commit any right opportunist mistakes in the past decade. The decisive question today, however, is the correction and eradication of our left-sectarian errors of the past decade.

Bureaucracy in the Party

The two questions most often referred to in the pre-convention discussion is bureaucracy and the lack of airing of differences in the leadership. The two are generally seen as intimately related. The greatest demand in the Party is for guarantees against a recurrence of bureaucracy, which plagued our Party in

pre-1945 as well as in post-1945.

Guarantees against bureaucracy cannot start with any individual professions that "I will never again be a bureaucrat." For, though bureaucracy has its base in wrong policies and the attempt to browbeat the membership into their acceptance, it has its base, above all, in a system of work, stemming from the fundamental structure and character of our Party organization.

This structure, a proto-type of the Leninist party of a new type, was borrowed, hook, line and sinker, from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. There has been little creative Marxist thinking in the United States with regard to the theory of Party organization as it applies to American specific conditions.

There is a theory to the effect that in our Party there are two types of bureaucrats—the one "charming," the other the "thumping" kind. Such a division might hold good for a popularity contest between bureaucrats, but scarcely meets the question of wiping out bureaucracy. While allowing for different characteristics in individuals, the answer must be sought elsewhere.

I believe that what is needed is a drastic change in the structure and character of the Party organization, a change in the monolithic character of the Party, a change in the form of its democratic centralism (and not only by giving the democratic part of democratic centralism a chance to work), so as to open channels for dissent and democratic expression, before, during and after pre-convention discussion.

What is required is an organizational structure conforming to a Party with a line of peaceful transition to socialism, a Party based on American democratic traditions of organization. The fear of turning our Party into a debating society is not well-founded. It has often served as a screen to stifle debate and democratic discussion. Often, too, under the guise of fighting so-called anti-leadership attitudes, our present structure has put a brake on the emergence of new, creative ideas.

I particularly bear in mind the type of bureaucracy, so flagrant in the New York leadership, in the period of 1945-51 and for which I bear so heavy a share of responsibility.

An element of the bureaucracy that pervades the thinking