

Thoughts on the draft resolution

The Party Forum

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THE CRISIS IN THE PARTY

"IF THE PARTY were definitely more proletarian in its composition it would not be so subject to the political confusion which is now harassing it." This profound statement is found in Foster's brilliant speech before the National Committee on August 23, 1956. It strikes at the very heart of the serious situation that faces the party. The opponents of Foster on the Draft Resolution are waging a frantic and desperate battle to save their comfortable chairs as leaders of the party. The 20th Congress of the USSR Communist Party evaluations have brought about a healthy and determined spirit to apply Marxism-Leninism democratically, with modesty and patience. We, too, have our share of "cult of the individual" in our party.

The assenters of the Draft Resolution are amongst those who achieved their leadership during the years which saw a depression, anti-fascist wars both in Spain and the world, imprisonment and etc. Such painful experiences are not desired by any of us. We will always cherish their contributions and sacrifices. However it is felt that such past experiences cannot always be looked back upon and therefore justify their leadership.

There is a cry by the comrades in the party today to place in leadership industrial workers with rich experiences and theory of Marxist-Leninist character. This bold and independent logic has shaken the local and national leaders to their bootstraps. It has revealed at the same time an exposing picture of the class weakness of our leaders. It is no accident, therefore, that a call for abolishing the industrial clubs and moving our comrades in the shops to community clubs is made by some of these leaders. It is no accident that they are creating confusion and demoralization to detract from the main issue — the strengthening and uniting of our forces.

THE CLASS IDEOLOGY of the writers of the Draft Resolution has finally caved in. They are no more interested in the life of a worker. They are easing their way out by "short cuts" and "exceptionalism." Their underestimation of the working-class power is an exposing contradiction of their own isolation from the people in our country—and most of all their lack of understanding Marxism and Leninism. What do they know about how to work in a Taft-Hartley era in a shop and gain the influence and respect of the workers? Haven't they heard that the Kohler workers are not ready to capitulate to the bosses? That the class struggle still exists is evident by the numerous strikes and fierce struggles for better pay and healthier working conditions during the past year or two. The workers aren't ready to Browderite. Yet, is our own party?

Such boldness to refute Leninism by these national leaders will bring shame, sharp criticism and a true awareness by other parties of the seriousness of this ugly situation that exists. Will our national leaders refuse to hear their plea? After all . . . to criticize and self-criticize on an international scale is Leninism. Dennis, Gates and etc. proclaim that they want socialism. Do they realize that they are only prolonging capitalism with their opportunism and "exceptionalism" and retarding the movement towards world socialism?

Really, Dennis, Gates and etc. . . . it isn't so terrible to work for a living for a change and meet the people.

Los Angeles.

THERE IS a crisis in the party, and it would be folly to minimize how serious it is. Fundamental concepts have been shaken and uprooted, and it is understandable why a weakening of confidence in the party, and uncertainty as to its ability to change, should be so widespread among the membership. We must make some basic and sweeping change at our convention, if the party is to survive as more than a sect.

Our mistakes were not simply those of tactics or political estimates. We must go deeper than that. Our sectarianism goes back to a dogmatic interpretation of our theory, characteristic of our party from its inception. We are now reviewing many fundamental theoretical concepts which we had formerly treated as though they were fixed for all time. The most important thing that is happening in the world Communist movement today is that each party is seeking to break with dogmatism, and applying Marxism-Leninism in a creative way to their own country. Where they are moving too slowly in that direction, they are courting disaster. The creative contributions to Marxism-Leninism which are being made in many Communist parties since the 20th Congress were once regarded as "heresy." It is all the more regrettable, I think, that Comrade Foster should cry "heresy" at this time, at the propositions put forth by the National Committee in the party discussion.

To me, the question as to whether we call ourselves Marxists, or Marxist-Leninist, is largely a war of words. I think we should base ourselves on those principles of Marx and Lenin which are universally valid, and distinguish them from those which were valid for a certain period or in different historical circumstances, but not necessarily valid for our country today. We should also not be afraid to say that some concepts which we formerly regarded as immutable principles were never valid for America.

We should declare our independence of any reliance on the Marxists of other countries to determine our path for us. While we do not rate very high as masters of Marxist theory, only American Marxists can, in the final analysis, chart the American road to Socialism. This does not deny that we can learn from the rich experience of the international working-class movement. But we must, above all, base ourselves on American conditions, history, and traditions.

I THINK we can adhere to the principle of international working-class solidarity without negating patriotism and concern for the national interests of our own country's people. And, perhaps we can learn from the bitter and tragic experience of other parties in this regard.

We should regard ourselves as an American Marxist party which strives to win support for its socialist outlook by participation in the political struggles of the day, and by ideological struggle, that is, in the battle to win men's minds through the many democratic channels which exist on the American scene. It must retain its working-class character and outlook as a party of action, but must place greater stress than we have on developing forms of mass education on what Socialism means for America. By this I do not mean that we should become a socialist debating society. There may be a limited part which other socialist groupings can play, who conceive of themselves in that role, but they cannot take the place of a Marxist working-class party.

We must become a truly democratic party, which will require a sharp break with past principles of organization. No policy should be made without full debate, including consideration of opposing views or alternatives. The right of dissent should not be closed

after decisions are reached. Policies should be reviewed, and if necessary reconsidered, after being tested in practice. But we must devise some way whereby discussion does not become aimless and unduly protracted, and the events we are discussing have not passed us by before we have arrived at any conclusions. If we are to be a party of action, participating in the great battles of the day, we must have a system of organization which, while guaranteeing the fullest democratic practice, also results in unity of action when the majority has decided.

I would not favor changing to a po-name at this time. I do not think it would begin to solve our problems in connection with our fight for legality, at least at this stage of the fight. We may be forced to make some changes, sooner or later, which will help us win the right of Marxist party to a legal existence, and when that becomes necessary, changes in form or name are not a matter of principle. Under those circumstances, I believe such changes would be understood and accepted by the bulk of our membership, as well as outside the party, but this is not the case today.

IF THE REASONS advanced for political association are other than those of legality, then I believe they are likewise not warranted. Changes in form or name would only be justified if they reflected changes in our function and role in an entirely different situation, for example, if we were one Marxist grouping within a much broader socialist movement. Under present circumstances, such changes might feed tendencies toward liquidation of the party, which we must fight against.

I think we should be frank in admitting, however, that the tendency toward liquidation of the party was strengthened by the loose way in which we have been tossing around the slogan of a "mass party of socialism." This slogan gives a false picture that there is some short-cut to get out of the dilemma we are in. It would be a dangerous illusion to see in this slogan, at this time, more than a hope for the future. The changes we must make in our party will help pave the way for it, but they will not bring, overnight, such a mass party. We cannot realistically regard the objective situation in the country today, nor the status of the socialist-minded movement here, without realizing that a mass party of socialism can only be a long-range perspective. Certainly it cannot be realized by our merging with socialist-minded groups that are far weaker, more sectarian, and even more divorced from the American working-class than we are.

There are many questions that none of us can answer at this time. I doubt that our convention will answer all of them. But of one thing I am sure. If we do not take a big step in breaking with the past in our dogmatic interpretation and application of Marxist theory, in our system of organization and leadership, and in our practices, our party cannot survive as an effective force on the American scene. And I am deeply perturbed by Comrade Foster's arguments, not as to the validity of one or another of his statements or criticisms, but because I think that the main weight of his position in the present party discussion is being thrown against any real change, and against any guarantees that we will not make the same mistakes all over again. I do not see in his position any real fight to break with dogmatism; on the contrary, his charges that the National Committee is "abandoning Marxism-Leninism" sounds to me like a preoccupation with sticking to the letter of Marxism-Leninism rather than its essence, and such a preoccupation can only lead us back to dogmatism.

I SUPPORT the Draft Resolution of the National Committee, as a beginning in the direction we have to move. I am not satisfied with many parts of it, and I have heard many justified criticisms of it. But I think we should not lose sight of the fact that the last section of the resolution, on the party, does reflect in some measure the kind of changes widely demanded in the course of the party discussion. I wouldn't defend to the death every formulation in it; certainly some of them are highly debatable, and can be changed at the convention. But this does not warrant the wholesale condemnation of the resolution, which some comrades are engaging in. And it does not justify the charges of "Right-Wing" and "Browderism," made by Comrade Foster, which violate the spirit of a democratic discussion.

The crisis in the party was caused by mistakes we all shared in. It was aggravated by the failure of the leading members of the National Committee to speak out earlier in the discussion, and to speak plainly. Perhaps this was due in part to the fact that it took time for opinions to crystallize. But it was also due to the fact that the leadership has not been in the habit of taking the membership into its confidence, and old habits die hard.

It is only now, in the final weeks of the discussion period before the convention, that we are beginning to come to grips with the essential questions that must be resolved by the convention, and the only assurance we have that they will be resolved is that the issues will be placed squarely before the whole party membership.

The unprecedented world situation we are in presents the greatest challenge to our party and the world Communist movement. Whatever our failures up to now, they were caused by the fact that we have not applied Marxism in a creative way to our country. In this sense, Marxism has had no real test in America. The challenge we face is whether we can become a party of creative Marxism. I don't think that any of us can answer that for sure, but I think we have the creative forces in our party to make a beginning in that direction.

WILLIAM SCHNEIDERMAN.

Group opinion on merger

Here is our group opinion in answer to the many recommendations that we become part of some larger socialist organization.

It is not likely that such an organizational change would insure us more freedom to move. World developments today give evidence that the main struggle is the struggle of American monopoly capitalism against, not the C. P. itself, but the perspective of socialism in all forms and variations.

Moreover, on account of the objective condition of relative prosperity in this country, there is no basis at the present time for a large party of socialism.

We are a tiny group, and it is important to maintain our identity and the ability to take an independent position, building our own party while at the same time working, on a united-front basis, on all possible issues with other socialist-minded groups.

Merging a C. P. into a large people's party should be a tactic of strength, as was shown in the East European socialist countries after the second World War, whereas here, at this time, the concept would be based on weakness. In other words, we would incur the danger of succumbing instead of being one of the leaders of such a coalition, and lose our ideological identity and independence of thought.

Young Debs, Echo Park Section.

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A DEMAND FOR EDUCATION

ON THE OCCASION of my very first club meeting, I was told that one of the most important functions of the Party was the education of its members — and that such education never ceases. Delighted, I enrolled in a six-week class that night. Eight years later, I look back on that class as the only one I have ever actually attended—despite constant announcements of classes to be formed, schools to be opened, etc. With each announcement, I requested permission to attend—and permission was granted. The classes never were held!

I cite this case as indicative of the crying need for education of our people. Every state, county, division, section has the obligation to set up classes, to be conducted on the highest level of Marxist understanding. The present disintegration, the falling away of membership, the disillusion, can be traced in large part to the lack of development of our rank-and-file, and is proof within itself that club educationals are insufficient for the training of cadres.

As for the fields within which we should theoretically have done the best work—the liberation of the oppressed: here we have fallen down most deplorably. Considering the position of the Negro people in our country, they should number 40 per cent to 50 per cent of our membership. Instead, we are virtual strangers to them. It may be said, with little credit to the party, that the two great gains of the past five years—the outlawing in the courts of restrictive covenants, and the Supreme Court decision on integration in the schools—is basically the work, not of the Communist party—but of that middle-class, nationalistic organization, the NAACP!

Even the small number of Negroes who were part of our ranks in past years have dropped away to a distressing degree. And this is due to our work methods. We have been more concerned with throwing around the term "white chauvinist" at our membership than with actually making our influence felt within the Negro communities. Likewise, we have been far too free with our accusations of "bourgeois nationalism." In every liberation movement in history, the people involved have fought for their freedom on a nationalistic basis. Rather than criticize our Negro members for "nationalism" when they speak as Negroes, it would be wise to make an attempt to understand the pressing causes which create this nationalism.

FOR EXAMPLE: the hub of the Negro community is the church — and Baptist ministers have far more influence with the Negro people than we. Would it, therefore, not be practical, from a dialectical standpoint, to learn to work with the Baptist minister, who speaks purely as a Negro, with no understanding of the white trade-union movement?

Proof of the validity of this is the fact that the Catholic Church has done a better job of integrating the Negro people than we Communists!

The intensity of feeling evidenced in the church is one we white comrades must fully appreciate and understand—for our lack of understanding of this feeling has isolated us from the Negro people to the extent that they look upon us as strangers and enemies.

While on the subject of the church, permit me to utter another criticism of our methods. Our anti-clerical attitude has done little to endear us to the sincerely devout American people. The concept of Jesus Christ has been a part of civilized life for many years—and Communists who permit themselves the stupidity of public ridicule of Christian doctrines are only injuring the Party. It is one thing to make our distaste for Christian doctrine and the organized church known within the privacy of party clubs and another to voice them in the hearing of those to whom our "heresies" can give offense.

TO RETURN to the matter of the oppressed: anti-Semitism continues on

the upswing in our country — but despite the fact that our membership rolls show a disproportionate number of Jews, our efforts to struggle against anti-Semitism have been discouragingly small. Further, we are completely isolated from the great mass of 5,000,000 American Jews. We shun the middle-class organizations — the B'nai Brith, Pioneer Women, Anti-Defamation League, Hadassah. We play no part in the temples, the synagogues. We ignore the days which five thousand years of oppressed Jewry have held holy. Is there any wonder that Jews consider us anti-Semites?

We can only command the respect and cooperation of the Jewish people by joining with them in their struggle!

And the same holds true for the Mexican people, most of whom close their doors in our faces when we try to sell them our press!

Proof of our failure was the Rosenberg case. In Los Angeles, with the second largest Jewish community in the nation, it was impossible to find a Jewish rabbi to intone the prayers for the dead when Emmanuel Bloch, the lawyer who defended the Rosenbergs, passed on. That this man, who fought for Jews, as a Jew, was so dishonored by the Jewish people that we of the left were forced to appeal to a Unitarian minister to say the "kaddish"

shows how far we Communists have drifted from our objectives.

THEN THERE is the matter of our press. Despite the many discussions at which this point has been raised, two reports in the PW by Al Richmond have failed to mention the subject: the removal of the People's World to Los Angeles. It is my understanding that the paper was originally based in San Francisco because it was a strong trade-union center, whereas Los Angeles had little industry. Today, this situation is vastly changed. Los Angeles is now the third largest city in the nation. As the aircraft capital of the world, it employs 200,000 workers—organized. It has a vast steel industry—organized. It is the second city in the nation in automotive—organized. It is the second or third most important garment center of the nation—badly organized.

Even if this were not so—the rate at which people pour into this city makes it the legitimate home of our press. One thousand persons per day come into Los Angeles, 400 of whom remain. They need homes, jobs, a way of life, integration into the community—particularly the Negroes fleeing the South. What better way of educating them, along with the already-organized workers, than with a press that meets their needs?

This in itself should be the answer to the defeatist talk of reducing the People's World to a weekly. What we need is more and better — not less!

ONE FINAL SUBJECT: the terrible defeatism which suggests that the party dissolve, or merge with other socialist-minded groups . . . and which takes the form of people dropping out with the comment "why should I go on knocking myself out?"

The truth is, comrades, that like the American people around us, we American comrades are soft. We are filled with self-pity for our struggles and oppression during the cold war era. What nonsense! Compared to the struggle of Communist parties in other nations—including France, Spain and Italy, which have not yet achieved socialism—we American Communists have had the equivalent of a Sunday School picnic during the cold war! Consider that of a nation of 160,000,000 people, roughly 200 have been arrested under the Smith Act, and about 108 jailed! Compare this with Spain, France, Italy, Germany. And does anyone believe that Mao's followers were gently treated by Chiang Kai-shek!

The Communist Party has not suffered a fraction of the persecution which is the every-day lot of the American Negro people. Let us learn

(Continued on Page 3)

A condemnation of the PW

We strongly condemn the editorial policy of the Daily Peoples World toward the present political crisis in the New Democracies.

What is this editorial policy? It can be outlined in the following terms:

(1) Play down and in effect distort the demands of the working class and student organizations in the New Democracies. It seems to make no difference whether these demands are directed toward the extension of democracy in the factory or university, or whether they are directed against Communism Party and Government bureaucracy. In the instance of Poznan the PW characterized the revolt of the working people as an "imperialist led uprising" and continued to carry out this policy even after the Polish Government acknowledged the just demands of the peoples' movement.

In the case of Hungary the PW never has published the facts of who was rebelling . . . that there was a general strike . . . or what the demands of this movement were.

(2) Play up and thereby distort any and all instances of fascist or imperialist support for the "unrest" in the Peoples' Democracies. The purpose of this tactic is to reinforce the idea that the workingclass demands in these countries are imperialist inspired. Point out that Eisenhower and Dulles support the unrest and ipso facto, the Communist or Government policies in these countries are correct!

(3) Extensively quote the Soviet press when it criticizes events in Poland or Hungary. This serves further to discredit the people's movement.

(4) Extensively quote the bourgeois press (AP and UP) when it is helpful in discrediting the popular demands. When the bourgeois press prints the demands which show the working class character of the people's movement . . . ignore this material!

(5) Bury or completely ignore the news when policies (1), (2), (3), or (4) do not apply. This approach has been most consistently followed during this past week (prior to Oct. 29) in the Hungarian crisis.

(6) If the working masses continue to make Socialist history in the New Democracies regardless of our paper's policy . . . and their governments make much needed reforms after the greatest political pressure and perhaps considerable bloodshed . . . then our paper makes a complete switch and hails the new developments as a logical normal advance and "proof" of the vitality of Socialism in these countries.

Over the weekend (Oct. 29-31) the Soviet government made self critical remarks about the unfortunate use of Soviet troops in Budapest . . . at the

same time the Daily Worker came out and 'deplored' the use of Soviet troops to suppress popular demands in Hungary. The Hungarian government made sweeping concessions to popular demands. These included: dissolution of the secret police, withdrawal of Russian troops, broadening of the popular base of the government, and agreement to allow workers' councils to be formed in the factories . . .

On Tuesday following this the PW carried a front-page editorial titled "The Tragedy of Hungary." This was a fine, straightforward editorial characterizing "the tragic events in Hungary" as a "bloody monument to the crimes and blunders of the Stalinist era."

Unfortunately, however, it might also be referred to as the tragedy of the PW editorial policy because it repeats the characteristic switch as outlined above in item 6, and because it comes from the editors only after the statements of the Soviet government and those of the Daily Worker.

* * *

For the clearest indication of how this anti-working class editorial policy applies we refer the readers to the Friday, October 26, edition of the paper. This issue was published at the time when all sources agreed that there were thousands of casualties, and blood was flowing in the streets of Budapest. What then does the PW say about this incredible situation? What political leadership does our paper give its readers horrified at these events?

First, it does not refer to Hungary at all on page one. It devotes the front page to the domestic electoral scene and at the bottom of the page prints a story on "the new life opening in Poland." (This is to make us all feel that things in the New Democracies are not so bad after all.) Then on page three appears the story "changes erupt in Eastern Europe." There are 36 paragraphs in this account. The first 24 are devoted to changes in Poland, and the last six give us some background on the Hungarian situation, but there is scant mention of what is actually happening politically.

Next, on page five there is an editorial called "Unrest in Eastern Europe." This title is totally misleading. The entire editorial is devoted to Mr. Eisenhower's interference in the internal affairs of Hungary. Now, it is certainly true that Eisenhower and Dulles are prepared to climb on any band wagon that appears to be anti-Soviet in character. But to place the editorial in this context only, once more illustrates an editorial policy which implies that the "unrest" is in-

spired or led by the imperialists. The facts are that there was a general strike in Hungary, that the leaders of this strike had set forth their demands . . . The demands included building Socialism by extension of mass democratic participation, and repudiation of the Warsaw Pact (i.e., the removal of Soviet troops). The people were fighting Soviet tanks in the streets of Budapest, but our editorial polemicizes against Mr. Eisenhower's interference in Hungarian affairs.

Can an editorial policy like this do anything but further sap the political strength of the Socialist movement? Can an attitude of apology for a bureaucratic and arrogant Socialist government be excused because that government has Communist leadership? What other conceivable reasons could be given for this kind of an editorial policy?

We would like to remind the editors that the loyalty of the PW should be directed first of all to the welfare and struggles of the working class and to building Socialism!

To confuse this loyalty with a loyalty for a particular Socialist government or party is to totally abdicate from political leadership.

Many of us hoped that Tuesday's editorial on "The Tragedy of Hungary" indicated that our paper's editors had changed their ways. This hope was severely bruised by the Friday editorial titled "A Socialist Commonwealth?" It quotes the Soviet government: "Close fraternal co-operation and mutual aid between the countries of the Socialist Commonwealth on the basis of full equality, respect of territorial integrity, state independence and sovereignty, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of one another."

The PW editorial then states that the Soviet government "backs them up with specific actions." "It is withdrawing troops from Budapest, offers to negotiate withdrawal of armed forces from Hungary, Rumania, and Poland, and to call home its economic advisers." The editorial then goes on to state that "what is taking place now is a return to fundamental Socialist principles."

The readers know what happened in Budapest subsequently, during the next few days. We would like to submit that if the PW editors recognized "fundamental Socialist principles" on Friday, why were they not recognizable the week previous or six weeks previous? Can our paper return to those fundamental Socialist principles — and stick to them, regardless of the position others may take?

Club, San Francisco.

What kind of party do we want?

THIS REPORT, endorsed by the entire membership of Club #2, Hollywood, is based on the club's consideration of a lengthy text recently issued by the Los Angeles County Board of the CP.

The text contained voluminous proposals for organizational changes in the inner-party structure. Our club made this a topic of discussion for several hours, and it is noteworthy that we bogged down again and again, not quite knowing how to evaluate the proposals in question.

Finally, we unanimously decided that we couldn't judge the merits or demerits of the County Board's proposals until, first, an important prior question had been answered, to wit: "What kind of party do we want?" This question comes first because we believe that form follows function.

Ergo, when we have decided on the kind of party we want, we shall then be in a position to consider the necessary form of organization by which to function effectively. More likely, the form will evolve by virtue of the kind of policy and activities we are engaged in.

Now, as to the kind of party we want, our club considered the three alternatives which have been discussed in the party press:

1) Liquidation of the CP, and formation of a new, broader mass party for Socialist-minded people.

2) Non-liquidation of the CP, but a gradual change-over to a mass Socialist party as described in No. 1.

3) Retention of the CP as it is, but with organizational changes along the lines of the "New Look" that would insure inner-party democracy.

ON THE WHOLE, our club membership favored #2 (that is, non-liquidation of the CP, but a gradual changeover to a broader mass Socialist party). We favored this choice, but with this reservation: we urgently desire a party that can operate legally under the laws of our land!

This posed for us the question: "Can a legalized party be established without first liquidating the CP, which right now is an 'outlawed' party? We realize that this question is no easy one to answer, even for legal experts. But we'd like to have this question get into the hopper for earliest consideration. And, until it is answered, we shall be in a continual state of indecision as to choosing between alternatives 1 and 2.

To repeat for emphasis, all our members would prefer to "go steady" with a party that enjoys a legal status.

Finally, our club seeks clarification on the kind of Socialist-minded groups that would be included if the party

were to change over to a broad mass Socialist party. In short, who are these main groups? What do they stand for? Which groups can be considered trustworthy and sincere enough to ally ourselves with?

For example, in the case of those groups which bear a Marxist label but which we have branded Trotskyites — would they be welcome in the new setup?

Before signing off, we should like to compliment those who have made this printed Forum possible. Its value is incalculable.

—Chairman, Club #2, Hollywood.

A demand for education

(Continued from Page 2)

from our oppressed how to endure under oppression—and go on struggling. And as we study—let us become aware of the nature of our nation—and recognize that the precepts Lenin used to lead the illiterate masses who toiled under the Czar do not apply, except in principle, to the American working class. Let us recognize the weapons of the enemy, which gives us a struggling working class with a middle-class ideology — and learn to discuss the problems of "pork chops" on the level that American workers consider acceptable! We must learn that it is less that the American worker is opposed to socialism—than that we Communists have not learned how to present socialism to him! That our failure to play a vanguard role in the class struggle indicates that our attitudes have been obscured by Tolstoyan sentimentality. As Tolstoy spoke of the "beautiful soul of the Russian peasant," we talk of the American worker in blue jeans and goggles as the "toiling masses." Neither Russian peasants nor American workers see themselves on this sentimental level.

One further item: This critique began with a demand for education. It must end with the same. Before we can decide whether we can make our cause one with that of other socialist groups, we have to know what they are and what they stand for: We want to know: What is a Trotskyite? A Norman Thomas Socialist? The Socialist Labor Party? What are the other socialist groups? Wherein do we differ with them?

Let us educate ourselves—and struggle toward the inevitable goal of Socialism—which the American people will enjoy in the foreseeable future, no matter what we Communists do!

—Los Angeles.

'From the masses, to the masses'

OUR PARTY'S ideological and physical isolation from the masses of the people is evident and much has been critically said in this regard.

However, it is also true that an examination of party membership would show that the great majority of our comrades are active in mass organizations, trade unions and political organizations.

How come this contradiction?

I think the answer lies in the ignoring and circumventing of what should be the decisive role of the party rank and file organized into community, industrial and shop clubs; the one-sided domination and preparation of our party program (our mass line) and guidance of this program by a leadership that, in the main, have been separated from practical work and connection with the masses of the people.

Our Chinese comrades, in order to insure a collective leadership, have a slogan: "From the masses to the masses." They state: "The whole history of our work teaches us that whenever this line is followed, the work is always good, and even if there are mistakes they are easy to rectify; and whenever this line is not followed, then work is marred by setbacks. This is the Marxist-Leninist method of leadership, the Marxist-Leninist line of work."

What does this slogan mean for us? Is it applicable only to the struggle for Socialism in China?

No, definitely not!

Would there be any doubt that had we followed such a policy, where many of the basic immediate demands for our party program would flow from the masses, much of our sectarian errors of the past might well have been avoided or at least, mitigated?

FOR EXAMPLE, could we have proposed an immediate program for Negro Liberation based on "self-determination" and the struggle for separate nationhood when the masses of the Negro people were heart and soul for "integration?" Not, if we were listening to the Negro people and accepting the best of their ideas based on their practical needs and experiences, not on our theory based on textbooks, even if these theories might be ultimately correct.

Would there be any doubt that our present ties with the Negro people would be on much firmer ground, if we had accepted as a method of work "From the Negro people to the Negro people?"

If we had also followed such a policy in relation to all our activities, trade union and otherwise, our party, even though under the savage attack of the past years would have been more able to resist those attacks, suffering less loss, and more closely knitting itself with the working class and the people of our country.

It must be pointed out that in following the previously suggested course we must be careful to avoid sliding into the quicksand of tailism, of trust in spontaneity, of negating the role of Marxist-Leninist theory.

How, then, can we regain a correct perspective and re-establish our ties with the people? In my opinion, through the party club as the basic organization of the party. Its membership is that unit of the party that is part of the masses of people. It is the part of the party which is closest to the needs of the people, constantly aware of their problems and their constructive ideas merging from these problems. This is not to negate the role of comrades in the formulation of the ideas.

ORGANIZATIONAL ways and means must be found to insure and guarantee the decisive role of the club in projecting these ideas and needs into our party program and insure their being carried out.

Also the organizational road must be found that will enable the leadership to fulfill its function in organizing and co-ordinating correct strategy and tactics around this program. To do this there must be close and continuous contact between the thinking of the rank and file and the leadership. The leadership must be regularly answerable to rank and file for all decisions, and an accounting to them of progress critically and selfcritically. Also, any member of a club must have the right to criticize any leader without fear of being disciplined.

It will not be easy for the clubs to assume these new responsibilities. In the past there has been little or no creative thinking emanating from the clubs at all. Old methods of work and thinking that impede the ideological and political development of individual comrades and of collective discussion, must be discarded. It is these comrades in the clubs, the rank and file, and the new comrades coming into the party, that one day will be elected to, and assume leadership of, the struggle for Socialism. They must be cherished and nourished, carefully guided so that in maturing they will represent the best and most advanced thinking of the people of our country.

—LOS ANGELES.

FOR SYSTEMATIC AND BASIC EDUCATION

IN LARGE PART we are middle-class in makeup, and this is reflected in our work and in our inter-party ideology. This was demonstrated in our group's inability to present the workingclass viewpoint in our railroad pamphlets until we called upon one of the workers to show us how we had failed. I think every effort should be made to overcome this defect. I myself realize my remoteness from the workingclass. It may be said that I am a worker, too, but my ideology is not that of a worker in basic industry, and to try to adapt myself to it is something more or less artificial. I don't know how representative I am in this respect, but my representativeness would bespeak an unhealthy condition for a party that is the vanguard of the workingclass.

On Negro work: the figures of Party membership are an appalling indication of the mistakes we have made, but this subject perhaps needs less discussion because a change of attitude is apparent. We are having the sense to recognize that the Negro people are going ahead and that we

must go ahead with them instead of trying at this time to lead them. Everything should be done to strengthen that aspect of the work.

Both of the above subjects are related to the over-all problem of the lack of education. I have known of only one club that tried to tackle it. Our education has too often been confined to topical material in political affairs and our understanding of the use of it dependent upon the degree of development of the club members. Usually we make an effort to make some application of these articles to our day-to-day activity, but it's an effort that is handicapped, to begin with, by the lack of systematic basic education. Very often our so-called educationals have largely to do with current events, with a presentation of the position we ought to take toward them without our having an understanding of WHY we should take that position. This encourages bureaucracy, direction from the top down, with the membership accepting a line and trying to apply it. We must take hold of the question of education, especially theoretical education, instead of choosing an ar-

ticle from PA and consider that sufficient.

Lack of education accounts for lack of integration of members who are good Communists but not Marxist-Leninists, and in this sense they are not as good Communists as they should be — people who are on the firing line but make a mess of their private lives. The proper kind of Communist education should attempt to tackle this kind of separation of our personal attitudes from our political attitudes. Our middleclass thinking is in part responsible. We don't have the goals that workers do. We are more subject to these weaknesses on account of our equivocal position between the workers and the petty bourgeoisie, prey to rationalizations and having to make a continuously conscious effort to avoid being seduced ideologically.

AS FAR AS our agitational work is concerned — though we certainly must not cease to criticize injustices and to raise the grievances of the workingclass—it has been far too negative. We are always tearing something down rather than pointing to

strengths and to traditions that can strengthen us. This is similar to the point that Max Weiss made in saying that we must rediscover America; but it is more than that, too. We should talk more about socialism outside our own circles. There has been too much allusion to the Soviet Union, and this naturally makes us prey to the charge of being agents of a foreign power. We have plenty of examples to draw from — one-third of the world. We speak of the eastern democracies instead of the socialist-countries.

We do not give enough time and thought to local conditions. Whenever a local issue has been raised it has had repercussions much wider than the issue itself, reaching more people, with the possibility of our involving them in further issues without hammering at international issues, such as trade with the Soviet Union, etc. Not that these international issues are not important; they are. But we often miss the boat by neglecting neighborhood issues that, if properly handled, could bear fruit later in building a united front. We must broaden our work.

—LOS ANGELES.

I BELIEVE the woman question is the key to a peoples' freedom. The economic condition of its women is the key to a peoples' freedom.

When the majority of the people, the women, are not equal in jobs and political status, a people is not free.

The largest group of women, the Negro women, are the lowest paid and unorganized group in our country. In any big city the largest group that uses the public transit system is the Negro women. They have no rights that anyone is bound to recognize, even their men in their own families. Oftentimes it is their brother who gets the education if the funds are short and both cannot go to college or any higher educational institution.

In most Negro homes both man and wife have to take a job. Then, very often, the woman can only get a live-in job where she is on call twenty-four hours per day. The pay is never enough for her to keep up a real home so she usually has to stay with friends on her one day off per week. Many couples cannot live in harmony with this arrangement and their marriage breaks up.

Some of my white friends think the white women are free now and we have no more need for union and other groups to help them get equality. I say the white woman is not free either. She has a little better chance of a job but in many cases the wage is not equal to her brother or husband. She is held back, too, and sometimes helps to undermine her Negro sister's chance

The woman question

to a better job because she does not see her responsibility.

The women of oppressed peoples suffer a double oppression for they share not only the oppression common to all of their people but also suffer oppression by their own men which is especially severe among oppressed peoples with low economic and social standards. The status of peasant women in pre-revolution Russia and China and of Negro women in the U. S. are examples.

WE SEE in socialist countries as soon as industry is taken over by the workers, the women soon become free. They are no longer dependent on a man or husband for their living. Women take pride in any work men can do, except maybe the heavy physical labor which takes more strength than a woman has. Women can learn anything men can. The mental equipment in each sex is the same. It is only a matter of getting the chance to prove one's self.

Too often the children born to a couple are considered the responsibility of the mother. Very often the mother has to work hard all day, then come home and cook, wash and iron for the children and her husband. A tired, frustrated mother is not good for the children. So we find unhappy children. Their whole lives are affected by the conditions in their homes. Our most precious gift to our society is our children, and yet they are made to be felt unwanted very early in life because no one wants them around.

In the U. S. success is measured by the amount of show you make with your money and gadgets, like cars, homes and television sets.

War and talk of war is very costly to our people and all such activities are brutalizing to our children and youth. They learn early to kill and to cause suffering. Little boys have been known to kill their playmates by hanging. They see such things in the movies and so-called funny books and television. The capitalist system depends on

profits and there is no profit in raising children.

OUR LEADERS are spending billions on war and only a few millions on education, with the result that our teachers are low paid and subject to all sorts of restrictions like loyalty oaths and are afraid to teach the truth to our children. Our country is fast becoming a nation of illiterates. So, I say, if the conditions are not changed soon the mothers in our country will have a worse lot than they now have and certainly we do not want that. Our women must be educated and trained in youth to take good-paying jobs and belong to strong unions, and the unions must be progressive in that they organize all women and men regardless of race, creed, color or political convictions. All unions should have an apprentice program to train the youth and an educational program for their members for upgrading in jobs.

There is another condition to employment for both men and women and that is age. A woman over forty years of age is considered too old for most jobs. She has to appear young and pretty. No matter how capable she is if she looks past forty, no job. That is why some women use dye on their hair and other means to look younger. Hair dye has been known to kill a woman when used over a long period. If women attain their economic equality, their social equality will follow very shortly.

H. C., Oakland.

Is 'correct party line' an idealist concept?

I WANT to touch on our party's errors once more, not because I enjoy picking at scabs or irritating a wound but because errors are the most important reason why we are having a convention, discussions, a draft resolution (hereinafter called d. r.) and a dissenting view hereinafter called d. v. (I have seen only one dissent so far, that of Foster on Aug. 23.)

I want specifically to call attention to the idealist concept of the "correct party line" and its two medieval scholastic offspring: "Politics by micrometer caliper or crystal ball," and "politics on the high horse or high wire." The d. r. is an example of micrometric politics, the d. v. of equilibrium politics. According to the d. r. the errors of the party have been errors characteristic of an inexperienced stock-market counsellor, crystal-ball gazer or auctioneer: In d. v. they have been the kinds of errors that discourage our youth from the profession of tightrope acrobatics.

In the d. r., emphasis is on precise appraisal; in the d. v., precise balance. In the 3 1/4 pages of the d. r. dealing with errors and weaknesses (pp. 43-6) occur the following phrases:

).(estimate (-ing, -ed, -ion), 6 times.
).(underestimate (-ing, etc.), 3 times.
).(overestimate (-ed, etc.), 3 times.
).(assess (-ment, etc.), 3 times
).(evaluation 1 time
).(appraised 1 time
).(size up 1 time

FOR EXAMPLE, it berates the party for having failed to "assess correctly" the year of the economic bust due to follow the current boom—never questioning whether sooth-saying is its proper business. As for the d. v., its 27 pages are peppered with so many lefts and rights that its could be mistaken for an account of a prizefight. It assumes that our party is something like the White Knight in Alice in Wonderland, addicted to falling off his horse to left or right, and it dedicates itself to the endless task of getting him back in the saddle — apparently never suspecting that riding horseback is perhaps not his proper vocation.

I'm not here arguing which side is righter or wronger; I'll speak on that elsewhere. What I want to point out here is that in both documents party mistakes are regarded as slight quantitative inadequacies (e.g., sharing the American philistinism, contempt for and even hostility to culture and cultural factors in the social dynamic).

And both documents leave moral

factors out completely, long as they are, and recent as are our painful memories of what happened in the USSR for lack of respect for socialist morality.

However, neither culture nor morality is my main subject. I want to contend that a "correct line," in the absolutist and intolerant sense that we Communists have used it up to and including this d. r. and d. v., is an idealist concept that must be abandoned. I want us to admit, in public as well as in private, that perhaps we do not know the exact and final truth about politics, economics, social organization, the problems of youth, Negroes, Jews, women, Amerindians, organized labor, unorganized labor, art, literature, music, the mass media of communication, military strategy and tactics, philosophy, chemistry, physics, anthropology, linguistics — and their ilk! What we do know as Marxists (or should) are certain broad movements, certain tendencies and probabilities, which are not clearly perceived by those unlearned in Marxism. But so long as we pretend to exact knowledge when in fact we are only guessing, so long shall we be obliged to flagellate ourselves in public for our underestimations, overestimations, incorrect assessments, faulty evaluations, wrong appraisals and failures to size up.

OUR THINKING that Marxism equips us to be micrometrists, equilibrists or prophets, is not only an idealistic error philosophically but a sin of vanity morally; and we should snap out of it right now while we are in the "outsnapping mood." We should see that there is no difference of principle between the d. r. and d. v. on (for example) the postwar policy of fighting for peace and against the threat of fascism. But while the d. r. "estimates" that we "overestimated" certain factors and "underestimated" others too subtle for our micrometer calipers to measure "correctly," the d. v. observed in our posture a "right tendency" here, a "left sectarian" position there — and even on occasion "left opportunism" and "right sectarianism"! — which, we are solemnly assured, caused the White Knight to fall off his horse so often it's a wonder he's still alive.

What kind of disease is this? We want to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect? Are we Fundamentalists? Revivalists? Talmudists?

I do not wish to be understood as

Present the facts before the conclusions

(Concluded from last issue)

If we only examine the last ten years by itself, we do so with one eye closed. If we begin to talk in a detailed way, about what has been happening to us and what did we learn from it . . . we will not be able to start at 1948 as though that was the year life began.

Considering the range of subjects in Dennis' pamphlet, its obvious that he couldn't have encompassed such exhaustive studies in that work. But then what is the true value of these 'hodge-podge' type pamphlets that specialize in generalities?

Also, it might not be feasible to . . . all at once and go into every corner of our long history right now. But why not at once select some of the more fundamental aspects: labor, economics; national question; the party's structure — and do a really thorough job of it!

I think our leaders are so abstract and mechanical because they are so far removed personally from the events they analyze and lecture about. But it is not only our leaders who do this. And here I believe is the rock-bottom reasons why we've been such blind followers: (indeed we're the building bricks for the whole structure of unscientific thinking and bureaucracy). If we fail to demand, both from leaders and ourselves, that our ideas, plans and activities be solidly based on the facts of life, how can we ever be "qualified to judge" (isn't that the way we always excused our inability

to understand an idea; or our disagreement with some aspect of the program. . . we weren't as big Marxists as Browder, or Foster or Dennis, etc.)

This is a 'hope and a prayer' that those many many people who have more connections with everyday life as it is lived in the USA than we've had for years, will write with facts, about our ideas, plans and conclusions. When this develops more and more, then I think we'll stop swinging with the pendulum from left to right and back again, with every shift in the activities of the ruling class.

Such a time it is, when many of us seem to be walking around with 10 . . . 15 . . . 20 years of our lives stuck up there in the air waiting for what will happen at the national convention. But vital as that convention will be, it will not necessarily solve the problem for many of us, of our relationship to our Communist movement. For some it will take longer and for some they may reach their conclusions before the convention . . . depending upon our backgrounds, experiences and our present situations in life.

For myself — my anchor is my determination to struggle for a Socialist movement in the United States that will be capable of leading our country to Socialism. And my decisions about this Communist movement must be guided by whether it adheres to that goal.

L.—LOS ANGELES

sneering at the struggle for exact knowledge or informed judgments, for of such is human salvation. On the contrary, my target is the vain pretense thereto, the swindling grab for credit where no credit is due, the arrogant ignorance that holds back progress. My plea is for humility — not a groveling, 'umble humility but one hardly to be distinguished from a decent pride — the dignified humility of the people.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we Communists overthrow all such idealist hokum by all the force and violence left in our Twentieth-Congress-weary brains and return to dialectical materialism—and if we don't know what that is or how it operates we'd better damn well start studying because we're 40 years late.

H. A., LOS ANGELES.

