

What Kind of a Change?*

By Eugene Dennis

THE CPUSA IS AT a critical turning point in its history. Emerging from the repressive blows of the cold war decade and profoundly shaken by the Stalin revelations and the tragic events in Hungary, our Party is in the throes of a grave crisis.

It is now striving to surmount its difficulties and move forward. It is seeking to overcome its relative isolation, rectify its past errors and draw the necessary conclusions from the far-reaching changes that have taken place in the world.

It is in this situation that many proposals and ideas are being put forward to enable our Party to resolve the problems that beset it and to enhance our contributions to our nation and its working people. In the search for correct answers, sharp differences and divisions have arisen in our ranks, including the divergent

views that developed and exist between Comrade Foster and myself and others concerning the April meeting of the National Committee and our approach to the main political line of the Draft Resolution.

In my opinion the struggle against Left-sectarianism and dogmatism—now and on the morrow—still remains the number one internal problem confronting our Party *nationally*. And this is so despite the fact that, as the Draft Resolution indicates, the danger of Right-opportunism is bound to grow in the present and coming period.

Recognizing that the political-ideological struggle against Left-sectarianism—which is so deeply ingrained in our organization—has only begun and will be a protracted one, it is also necessary to note that currently one of the most controversial issues of all—one that presently threatens the unity and future of our organization—is that now taking place in our ranks around the question of party versus association.

By now it must be clear to all that the differences among some of

* This article was written early in December, shortly after several National Committee members proposed transforming our Party into a non-Party organization, and after the New York State Committee adopted a series of motions recommending a change in the name and form of the Communist Party at its forthcoming national convention. Later, in its sessions of December 17-19, the National Committee adopted an amendment to the Draft Resolution reaffirming its opposition to any such changes at this convention, though a majority urged that these and related matters be examined further by the incoming National Committee—author's note.

us over proposed changes in the name and form of our Communist Party have deep roots. Beneath the surface lie profound differences over the future and basic character of our organization, and these, in turn, arise out of different estimates of the State of the Union, the world we live in, and the shape of things to come.

WHAT WE WANT

Most of the membership and leadership agree that big changes must be made in our Party, in its policies and practices—indeed they are long overdue. Most of those favoring these changes seek to learn from past mistakes and new developments, in order to build a more effective working class Marxist organization, with closer ties to the labor movement, the Negro people, and all progressive forces in America.

They see the urgent need for a drastic break with dogmatism and sectarianism. They consider it imperative to alter radically our methods of work, and assure genuine party democracy that will enlist the creative initiative of all our members—especially of those who participate in the big mass movements and organizations of the working people. They favor bold steps to refresh and strengthen the leadership at all levels. They believe, too, this requires that we modify or develop certain theoretical propositions in accord with changed conditions in interna-

tional, and national relationships.

This is the kind of change I advocate.

To effect such vital changes it seems to me that the primary questions involve guaranteeing a sound Marxist-Leninist program and policy; mapping out correct tactics and displaying greater political and organizing initiative in the popular mass movements for economic and social betterment, for Negro rights and civil liberties, for peace and social progress; achieving a stronger working class base and influence and broader united front relations; in streamlining the way we work and function, ensuring a new dimension to inner party democracy, including not only the right to dissent while abiding by the majority will—but, above all, assuring that our party membership is enabled to play a more decisive and consistent role in the formulation as well as the execution of policy.

NAME AND FORM

I believe questions involving a change of name and form of organization are, at best, subordinate and secondary. While these are legitimate matters of discussion and warrant consideration on their merits, and while the latter are not necessarily questions of principle—nonetheless they do involve matters of principle.

Further, it is my view that prop-

positions to change the name and form of organization of our party cannot be considered as things in themselves. They should be weighed in the context of the political situation and outlook. And this, of necessity, must also include a proper appreciation of the subjective factors, including the status and the trends and moods within our party.

While I have opposed the idea of transforming our CP into a political action association—and do now more strongly than ever—up until recently I for one have had an open mind as to whether a change of name might be desirable at the coming convention. However, for the past several months I have definitely concluded that to carry through a change of name now might have extremely negative effects.

At this moment when some in our ranks—including a number of leaders—contend that our Party is finished, bankrupt and hopelessly compromised, and when our Party is sorely divided on the nature of some of the changes our Party should make—even a change in name could have harmful consequences.

I wish to avoid and help prevent this.

I recognize, of course, that many comrades believe otherwise. Some of them, especially in New York, are waging an all-out crusade not only for a change in name, but also for a political action type of organization.

They believe that such changes are advisable and might bring certain advantages to the Party. Because of this, because of the cardinal issues involved, and because this question may probably play a special role at our convention, I wish to deal with some of the reasons which certain proponents of a political association advance in behalf of their proposals.

At the outset, it should be understood that earnest arguments are being advanced in behalf of transforming the Party into a political-action type of organization. These must be evaluated on their merits. In this connection it should be recognized that among those who advocate that we change the name and form of the Communist Party there are diverse schools of thought and different motivations.

Some say we should continue as a Marxist-Leninist organization, but not as a political party. They argue that a host of restrictive laws have already robbed us of our electoral status, and that in surrendering our claim to that status we would simply be facing up to a fact of life.

WRONG ADDRESS

I think these comrades address their demand for change to the wrong quarters: what needs to be changed are the undemocratic and un-American laws that now circumscribe our Party's civil liberty and electoral activity. Such laws cannot

be permitted to remain a "fact of life" in America, if we and other progressive and working class parties are to help keep open the democratic and constitutional processes of social advance and change. On the contrary. The defense and extension of the important, although limited, rights now grudgingly conceded to us as a minority party are vital not only to us Communists, but to all Americans who seek to restore the Bill of Rights and strive for a "New America."

Some of these comrades also argue that since our Party envisages and strives for a broad anti-monopoly coalition, and a new progressive political alignment based on such a coalition—expressing itself through a mass labor-farmer party or some other form of political re-alignment—and since this is a realistic perspective—that our participation in such an anti-trust coalition would be facilitated if we were not a political party.

But I think these comrades are in too much of a hurry to cross the bridge we won't get to for awhile. A nationwide anti-monopoly coalition and mass party, under labor's leadership, has yet to be built; what it will look like and how it will view our Party remains to be seen. Our participation in a new democratic coalition and political realignment of the future will be determined by the extent of our contribution to its development and growth, especially by what we do to help shape and un-

fold anti-monopoly mass movements,—rather than by the name or form of our organization.

Nevertheless, and since this is likely to be a process, some argue that we should therefore cease to be a political party now, so that meanwhile our members may more freely participate in the affairs of one or the other of the existing major parties. But how can we make our major contribution to the support of individual progressive or labor candidates whose program merits such support? Is it not through the trade unions and their political instruments, and through other popular organizations—rather than through the machines of the Republican or Democratic parties?

What would happen if our membership were diffused in one or the other of the two parties of Big Business? I think two things would happen: many individuals would lose their bearings and become more influenced than influential, and our Communist organization as such would be rendered impotent and reduced to conducting abstract propaganda for socialism.

Some comrades hope that the problem of regaining our constitutional rights and achieving full legality might be facilitated by changing the Communist Party into some kind of political action association. Obviously, in certain circumstances, it may be necessary to take some steps dictated by legal requirements. Yet today it should be borne in mind

that the architects of the McCarran Act and the Communist Control Act proscribed not the Communist Party, but Communist "action" and Communist "front" organizations. They "outlawed" any organization, including any trade union, that engages in militant working class struggle. Let those who doubt this look at the new attacks against the Mine, Mill & Smelter and the UE leaderships, and let them heed the current "states rights" drive to outlaw the NAACP in the South.

STRUGGLE IS REQUIRED

Must we therefore submit to and learn to live with our present status of twilight legality? By no means! The experience of the last difficult five years has demonstrated how deep is the American people's attachment to the Bill of Rights. For all our Party's shortcomings and mistakes, our staunchness under attack has helped growing numbers to understand that civil liberty is in fact indivisible, and that the democratic rights of labor, the Negro people and of all Americans are inextricably bound up with those of the American Communists.

The hard lessons of the days of rampant McCarthyism and the more favorable political climate of today create new opportunities for further spreading that understanding. New opportunities impose new obligations. Now, more than ever, our duty to our fellow Americans

requires that we play an even more effective role in the struggle for civil liberty and civil rights, for an end to anti-labor laws—while more resolutely and boldly rallying other forces for the repeal of all repressive legislation, amnesty for political prisoners, and an end to discrimination against Communists in labor and other mass organizations.

Those who think otherwise must have come to the mistaken conclusion that monopoly reaction is no longer a serious threat to democracy in America. Likewise they close their eyes to the fact that during the past year or so more and more liberal and labor spokesmen are speaking out in defense of the Bill of Rights for Communists and non-Communists alike, and in this process willingly meet and speak and cooperate with members and representatives of the CPUSA.

There are some advocates of a change to a political association, or an equally nebulous "League for Socialist Unity," who see this as a transitional move toward a new united party of socialism.

ON A MERGER

No one can say with certainty at this moment just when or how a broad mass working class party of socialism, based on Marxism, will come upon the American scene. It may develop primarily through and around our Party. It may come about through a merger of our party

with other Marxist groups—some already in existence, *although most probably with those yet to be organized from and within the ranks of organized labor*—all of which need to be encouraged and stimulated.

Certainly at the present time there is no realistic prospect or basis for a merger of the Communist Party with any of the existing groups which profess to be Marxist. Virtually all of these groups are narrowly sectarian, have the most tenuous ties with the working class, and do not have a basic Marxist program.

To date there has not emerged in any of them a sizeable or consistent Marxist grouping—although such a development probably shall yet occur. Hence any proposal for a new united party of socialism *at present* is realizable only on the basis of splinter groupings and of a mixture of Marxist and non-Marxist policies and program—all of which is contrary to what was projected at the April meeting of the National Committee.

In order to help advance the trend to a mass party of socialism, which should be resolutely fostered, the need of the hour is not wishful thinking about the eventual possibility of a merger of Marxist and pro-Marxist groupings. What is urgently required is a renewed effort to engage in fraternal discussion with all socialist-minded groups and people not only around basic issues of program, but also and above all in order to promote their united or

parallel struggle for labor and social welfare legislation, for civil liberties and civil rights, for peaceful co-existence and banning the H bomb, and for independent labor-farmer political action. In the process of developing unity of action for specific and urgent mass issues and demands, and in the course of fraternal exchanges around programmatic ideas—a sound basis can be laid for encouraging and cultivating the growth of diverse Marxist and Socialist groupings, as well as their eventual merger. This should be energetically developed everywhere. Simultaneously, and pursuant to this end, it is essential at all costs to consolidate and build the CPUSA as a strong Marxist-Leninist political party of the working class.

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Together with those who are legitimately concerned about the electoral and legal status of our Party, there are some who make no bones about the fact that they want to change not only the form and name of our organization, but its basic character as well. While enumerating or latching onto the reasons discussed above, they add other arguments that strike directly at matters of fundamental principle.

Thus there are some proponents of a political action association who consider that one of the prerequisites for building an effective mass Marxist organization in our country is to scrap the principles of a vanguard party. For the latter are considered

to be either "foreign importations," outmoded, or otherwise unsuited to the needs of the American working class and its socialist vanguard.

It is true, as the Draft Resolution correctly notes, that over the past decades we American Communists made not a few costly mistakes in the dogmatic and sectarian way *we* interpreted and applied Marxist-Leninist principles. And the severe abuses arising from the misapplication of these principles have tended to place some of these principles into question and to render suspect some of the terms used to designate them. But we should not let our errors or distortions of any principle lead us to throw out the-baby-with-the-water, to discard the *essence* of that which is valid and which needs to be interpreted and applied in accord with American conditions and working class interests.

FOR A VANGUARD

For instance, I for one do not believe that anything that has happened in these United States—including the historic upsurge of the Negro freedom movement and the progressive role of the NAACP, or the great promise of the merger of the AFL-CIO and the progressive role of certain unions—in any way obviates the need for a vanguard Marxist party of the American working class. Quite the contrary; though obviously the changes that have taken place in the labor and people's movement over the past dec-

ade or so definitely affects the *way* in which the adherents of Marxism-Leninism should develop and perform their vanguard role.

Now more than ever a Marxist vanguard is needed not only to help raise the class consciousness of millions of trade unionists, but also to help imbue wide sections of the working class with socialist consciousness. This is required not only to enable the working class to promote its fundamental interests and fulfill its historical destiny, but also to advance the immediate interests of labor and its popular allies.

Whether it is in the struggle for desegregation and abolishing Senate rule 22, for a 30-hour week without reduction in pay, for independent political action, for building a labor-farmer-Negro alliance, etc.—it is necessary that we American Communists, individually and collectively, display greater political and organizing initiative in helping implement and advance all decisions and programs of action of the unions and other mass organizations that are in the people's interest. It is necessary to expand and raise to new levels our contributions on the ideological front in the battle for ideas—and as a party to independently bring forward our own political position and views.

In this connection it is appropriate to heed the perceptive observations of the foremost Marxist of the 20th century—words which are still valid today and for us:

The task of the party is not to invent some fashionable method of helping the workers, but to join the workers' movement, to bring light to that movement, and assist the workers in the struggle which they have already started themselves.

The biggest struggles now under way in the United States are those for Negro rights and freedom and especially for full equality and democracy in the South; union and job security, higher living standards, and organizing the unorganized; adequate housing, education, social welfare; civil liberties and the enforcement of the Bill of Rights; outlawing H-bomb tests and atomic warfare, and ensuring peaceful negotiations between the East and West.

The real issue is not whether there is a need for a Marxist vanguard but precisely *how* we American Communists exercise our vanguard role in the new conditions of today. The answer to this can only be provided by the collective experience and judgment of the entire Party.

While some comrades question this—it is obvious that the economic royalists are not so indifferent as to what is involved. The continued existence and operation of the McCarran Act, the Taft-Hartley Act, the Communist Control Act and the Smith Act are proof-plus.

As for the question of democratic centralism—a concept and term which has been grossly abused and

misused in word and deed—this too is a cardinal working class principle of organization that should not be scuttled, though it definitely needs to be understood, used and developed in a new way. For it is an indispensable source of working class strength, particularly in a country like ours which has the biggest, most ruthless giant monopolies.

NUB OF THE QUESTION

Contrary to certain views, bureaucracy is not synonymous with nor inherent in democratic centralism. The nub of the question is how this principle is applied—one-sidedly and mechanically, or with full consideration for the twin aspects of its features, i.e., the combination of the greatest inner party democracy, including the right to dissent, with the policy and practice of subordinating the minority view to that of the majority will and of various party subdivisions to the highest bodies, including to the collective will of the national convention.

Moreover, the main features of democratic centralism are just as American as they are British or Russian, Chinese or Italian. As everyone knows, most American trade unions and even the U.S. Congress operate on a version of democratic centralism, even if these bodies happen to place their chief emphasis on "centralism."

In any event, it seems to me that the main changes embodied in our Draft Constitution which provide

guarantees for a vast expansion of inner party democracy within the framework of the concept of democratic centralism point the way to a new and sound application of that which is universally valid in this Marxist organizational principle, as well as of that which is extremely pertinent and applicable to our own American conditions.

As for the underlying concept of monolithic unity—a very cumbersome and misconstrued term—which some of the advocates of a change in name and form likewise wish to bury, suffice it to say that no genuine Marxist organization, party or association, could long exist if it discarded the substance of this basic precept which means having a common theory and political program, plus singleness of purpose and action. For what is involved here is not “freedom of discussion” versus “iron discipline” as some distortedly claim today. What is at stake is whether we Communists, while ensuring the right to debate and dissent, shall adhere to the science of Marxism-Leninism, and whether we shall be a united and a cohesive organization which can act collectively and with dispatch. To the extent that such terms as democratic centralism and monolithic unity may convey objectionable or confused meanings—these should be replaced by terms which accurately define precisely what we American Communists mean and want.

There are some advocates of an association who think the Communist Party is discredited and hopelessly compromised, and that there is nothing left for us to do but make way for and be superseded by some other “Marxist” alignment. Those who have left our ranks in the recent period put it as frankly and bluntly as that. Among those who have these same opinions and remain in the Party, some say we should re-organize the Party into a loose association, league, or some other transitional type of organization, in order to rise again sometimes, like some Phoenix, from the ashes.

THE PAST DECADE

Since no one can altogether ignore the Communist Party's proud achievements in the struggle against Hitler, Tojo, and Franco; for organizing the unorganized; for unemployment and social insurance; in defense of Tom Mooney and Sacco-Vanzetti; in championing the lives of the Scottsboro Boys and the rights of all the Negro people—it is said that the irreparable damage to our good name was done in the last decade.

No one who has read my report to last April's meeting of the National Committee can charge me with attempting to gloss over our grievous mistakes of those ten years, including those in which I share re-

sponsibility. Mistakes are one thing; bankruptcy and hopeless compromise are quite another thing.

We made many mistakes in our trade-union policy; but our worst enemy cannot say we ever failed to take the side of labor against the big corporations.

We made mistakes in regard to how best to advance the Negro people's liberation movement; but we always waged a resolute struggle against Eastlandism and its northern counterparts.

We made the mistake, at times, of overestimating the precise phase of the fascist danger in our country. We may have sometimes been sectarian in our struggle to defend the Bill of Rights. But we never exhibited cowardice in the fight against McCarthyism.

We sometimes made the mistake of overestimating the imminence of world war. But, in time, our vanguard opposition to the Korean War and the war in Viet Nam proved not so very far in advance of the peace-loving American people. And our endeavors to promote American-Soviet friendship and peaceful co-existence of the East and West found wide response among the American people at Geneva and is affirmed again by the current and extending grass roots demand for a new summit meeting.

It is true that in the last decade we did not always fight *correctly* against the main enemy—monopoly. But if we ever tended to compromise

ourselves by forgetting the real enemy, that happened in the period of the Communist Political Association in 1944; and *not* after the reconstitution of the Communist Party in 1945.

What really prompts those who make the charge that our Communist Party is discredited beyond repair? Is it not their notion that Marxism-Leninism is "discredited" or "obsolete"?

The myth that there are any infallible individuals anywhere in the world has been exploded. The best Marxists, being human, are not immune to error. But this incontrovertible fact does not now entitle non-Marxists, or self-styled "creative" Marxists to assume the mantle of infallibility.

Over the past decades we American Marxists sometimes made the mistake of regarding the social science of Marxism-Leninism as rigid dogma. We were wrong. But the fault lay in us, not in Marxism-Leninism. We will not be better off if we substitute new dogma for old, and fail to correctly interpret and develop and help enrich our advanced working-class science. And the worst mistake of all would be to throw away the compass merely because we misused it, and drift at the mercy of wind and tide.

Of course those who charge that our Communist Party is hopelessly compromised not only consider that Marxism-Leninism is discredited, but also that the socialist countries,

whose liberation from capitalist exploitation it guided, are equally compromised.

No one can deny that the leaders of the socialist countries are confronted with difficult, unprecedented and complex problems—some of them arising from the harmful effects of past mistakes and certain gross violations of socialist principles. But those who brush off their on-the-spot analysis of these problems, seek to prove a shocking contrast between “appearance and reality,” and minimize their pioneering effort to correct mistakes, effect changes and cope with the new problems arising from the emergence of socialism as a world system—obviously lack confidence in the working-class nature and the self-correcting potentiality of the socialist system itself.

I will deal with the implications of their position in another connection. Here it is sufficient to say that no violation of socialist principles committed by others and no errors of which others bear responsibility, can compromise us. Only we American Communists can compromise our Communist Party. We cannot ride piggyback on the Marxists of other countries, nor be carried by them either to glory or perdition.

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Among some of the proponents of an amorphous political association there is a kindred and allied school of thought. Some of these comrades argue that the profound change

which has taken place in the world requires that the Communist Party of the United States transform itself into a new type of organization ideologically independent of world Marxist thought.

WORLD CHANGES

It is obvious that very big changes have taken place in the world and that elements of significant change appear in our country. It is obvious that we can only solve our political and organizational problems on the basis of a common understanding of these changes, of the times in which we live, and the direction in which events are moving.

It is generally recognized, for instance, that the main features of the new situation include the emergence of a system of socialist states, the already far advanced and constantly spreading movement for national liberation in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and the existence of a group of neutral states opposing alignment with any bloc committed to the maintenance of world peace.

These historic developments have in no way altered the basic aims of the imperialists in our own or any other country. Of them it can be said that the more their tactics change, the more their strategic aims remain the same.

The imperialist leopard has not changed its spots. The contradictions inherent in monopoly capitalism constantly drive it to aggressive

and predatory acts and adventurist moves. It repeatedly draws back from the very edge of the precipice only because it must reckon with the enormous strength of the socialist, anti-imperialist and other peace forces that confront it, and because the monopolists realize that world capitalism could not survive an atomic world conflict.

It is for this reason that world war is no longer fatalistically inevitable.

Even the desperate acts of aggression against Egypt on the part of Anglo-French imperialism and its accomplice, Israel, which threatened world peace, illustrates this. Due to the aforementioned and related factors, the instigators of imperialist war and colonial enslavement have been forced to retreat, have suffered a severe setback and defeat. Not even the concealed imperialist interference of Wall Street via its backing of a "Users' Canal" can basically alter this situation.

THE SOCIALIST CAMP

The prospects for world peace rest to no small extent upon the unity and strength of the socialist and the other anti-imperialist and peace forces of the world. Any loss of strength and any weakening of the unity of the socialist camp and this zone of peace endangers the prospects for peaceful co-existence.

That is why those who exaggerate the real problems now faced by the socialist countries, cast doubt on

their willingness or ability to overcome these difficulties, or blow up out of all proportions differences between the socialist lands and their Marxist parties—do a poor service to the cause of world peace and social advance.

There can be no doubt, for instance, that the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union and Hungary bear heavy responsibilities for the costly mistakes that led to the recent events in Hungary. But some Communists emphasize only this aspect and ignore the new factors in this complex situation. Yet what Marxist can deny that wherever counter-revolution raises its ugly head it must be crushed; and that wherever peace is threatened it must be preserved?

We American Communists have the right and the duty to express in a comradely way our independent judgment, opinions, and criticism concerning the policies adopted by Marxists of other countries. We are obligated to do this in a constructive way and within the framework of promoting the national interests of the American people and fraternal working class solidarity. But surely we have no reason to doubt the devotion and contributions of the countries of socialism to the cause of world peace and national freedom and social progress.

Moreover, as American workers and as Communists, our prime duty is to expose and combat the aims of American imperialism—the main

enemy of America's national interest and the peace of the world.

I turn now to some differences of opinion regarding the situation within our own country and the direction in which things are moving here and conclusions being drawn from this in the debate over party versus association.

GATES' CHANGES

The nub of these differences is exemplified in one paragraph which I quote in full from John Gates' article, "Time For A Change": (*Political Affairs*, November 1956).

We are living in a time of great change. The labor movement has grown to 15 million. The AFL-CIO merger was a gigantic and historic step which foreshadows new rapid advances and increased political influence for the American working class. It is a sign of the times when such a reactionary as Nixon feels compelled to talk about a four-day week. Labor is already strong enough to win the 30-hour or four-day week without reduction in pay when the situation makes it necessary. The only thing holding it back is the relatively full employment in most industries. With increasing productivity reduction in working hours is inevitable. Labor is determined that never again will it permit the burden of future depressions to be placed on its shoulders as in the thirties.

With the first three sentences in that paragraph I have no quarrel. But I do think even the average, non-Marxist worker would be puz-

zled by the rest. The demand for a four day week without reduction in pay is no "fringe" demand. It is considerably more advanced than a demand for a substantial wage increase. For this demand is a direct encroachment on the surplus value produced by the workers and appropriated by the vested corporate interests.

Yet, according to Gates, the only thing holding back the realization of this demand is the "relatively full employment in most industries." In other words, the employers would grant this demand now (presumably without any serious struggle on the part of the trade unions)—if it were not that their present rate of profit is so *high*. All that is needed is a slight recession, with the inevitable "reduction in working hours" (otherwise known as layoffs) and, out of their somewhat reduced profits, the big employers would cut the work week without cutting the paycheck!

If things in our country have indeed changed to this extent, it will be news to the American workers. I doubt very much, however, that they would consider a party that tried to sell them such a bill of goods as working class, or, to quote Gates, "solidly based on American reality" or one to be "recognized and accepted by American workers as their own."

NO CRISIS?

According to Gates, American workers do not believe a new eco-

conomic crisis inevitable and "will follow the leadership of those with a program to prevent it, or to guarantee that they will not be its helpless victims *if and when* a depression does come." The emphasis is mine; and I think it important to note that Gates apparently thinks that capitalism itself has changed so radically that its fundamental contradictions have been or may be resolved, and that therefore cyclical crises are no longer inevitable.

This is a strange lesson to draw from our past mistakes when we often erred in predicting the *imminent onslaught* of a new economic crisis. Any working class party or political association basing itself on such an outlook would lose all claim to be considered Marxist, and if its leadership were followed could only disarm the workers and render them "helpless victims" before, as well as when, the economic cyclone strikes, as strike it must.

The American road to Socialism as described by Gates is truly unique. It is strewn with roses and follows a straight line from victory to victory. For Gates writes that here socialism "will come through the constantly successful struggle for peace, prosperity and democracy." And, in another connection, that "the struggle in our country will be of an evolutionary character and lead to an eventual revolutionary transformation."

This concept, I believe, has nothing in common with the established

position of our Party which projects, advocates, and strives for a peaceful and constitutional road to socialism. For the democratic road to socialism we envision is nonetheless a road of struggle—a struggle to curb and eventually break the power of monopoly capital. It is a struggle which will have to be led by the militant, class conscious, and united action of the working class in alliance with the Negro people, the exploited farmers, and other democratic sectors of our people.

It also appears from Gates' dream of the future that the revolutionary transformation of property relations, of capitalist society into socialist society, will not come about because the bourgeoisie is no longer able to rule in the old way, or because the working people are no longer willing to live under existing conditions, and must organize and struggle to realize their socialist aspirations.

On the contrary. According to Gates, conditions under capitalism will get better and better and then some fine day the American workers spontaneously will decide they want all this, and socialism too.

With such a perspective there is no wonder that some comrades reject the need for a vanguard party, for a Communist Party. And the fact of the matter is, if one were to accept their premise and outlook, there is even no need for a so-called Marxist political association; and a broad, mass working class party of socialism, based on the

principles of Marxism, would seem even more superfluous.

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What kind of a Marxist organization does the American working class really need? How should we strengthen and develop our Communist Party?

WANT BIG CHANGES

I am convinced that most of the membership and leadership want big changes. But they want these within the framework of building an independent, fighting, working class Marxist-Leninist organization—substantially in accord with the main political direction outlined in the Draft Resolution.

I believe we must radically democratize our Communist Party. We must establish political and organizational guarantees to ensure the enforcement of the collective will of the membership; to secure the pros and cons of divergent views and the periodic review of policy decisions; to curtail arbitrary powers of leading committees and to assure the strict adherence to all constitutional requirements.

I believe we must draw profound conclusions and effect many changes in our policy, structure, methods of work, and leadership. Above all, we must combat and uproot the deep-seated sectarian practices and dogmatic views which have plagued our Party over the decades. But whatever the future course of events may

dictate, I do not think we should change our form of organization now, or every time the wind shifts. Nor do I agree we should tamper with the scientific foundations of our Marxist ideology.

I think the American working class needs a truly scientific socialist vanguard which does not lose its bearings with every ebb and flow of the mass movement and political climate.

I think we need a party that can serve the American working class in time of relative prosperity and in time of economic recession or crisis. I think we need a party that knows how to lead the struggle against monopoly at all times. I think we need a party that militantly crusades for Negro rights, helps forge an unbreakable Negro-labor alliance and understands that the organization of the unorganized and the fight for the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments in the Deep South is the No. 1 democratic task of the nation. I think we need a party that knows how to combat American imperialism and its aggressive and predatory policies in periods of heightened international tension and in periods of relaxation which as now, with all their ups and downs and unevenness, offer new opportunities for establishing a stable peace.

DEMOCRATIC ROAD

I think America needs an advanced Marxist-Leninist working

class party to lead the struggle for a peaceful, democratic transition to socialism, and that after the advent of socialism in our country such a party will still be needed.

That kind of a party will not build castles in the air as an escape from the hard work of reaching, influencing and mobilizing wide sections of the working people—Negro and white, and laying the solid foundation for confidence in its program, policies and mass activity. It will not seek a substitute for effective mass work and Marxist ideas, nor shrink from telling the truth at moments when the truth happens to be unpopular.

That kind of a party will stand on its own feet and base itself on the realities of American life; above all, on the interests, needs and struggles

of the workers, the Negro people, the farmers and other exploited sectors of our people. It will also engage in comradely criticism of, as well as learn from the experiences of other Marxist parties, and help strengthen the bonds of solidarity between the workers of our country and those of all other lands.

I am confident that our membership, more closely tied to the working people of America than some seem to think, will register its collective judgment at our national convention for building a stronger and more effective American Marxist working class party—a united, cohesive, democratic and militant organization—that can better serve and advance the immediate and fundamental interests of America's working people.