The Browder Line in Practice

John L. Lewis. At the time, Lewis had a considerable following among workers, and unlike other CIO leaders such as Sidney Hillman and Dave Dubinsky, considered himself as much a big shot as the President. And Lewis was becoming increasingly impatient with Roosevelt's openly labor and policies, which compromised "leaders" like Lewis. FDR in a New York Times editorial put up of his 1937.0 campaign to reestablish the CIO: Roosevelt was concerned about CIO head John L. Lewis

fight the burden of this system on our backs, on the backs of the unemployed.

Sometimes we are asked if we are an organization around welfare. Our answer again: we do not believe that welfare makes an unemployed to unemployable people. People without jobs who can't get other insurance are certainly entitled to welfare, but we are an organization of workers. Our job is to build a mass organization of the unemployed, to unite workers employed and unemployed, to raise consciousness and unity around our needs and to express this unity, the aspirations of workers.

Widely Participated

Representatives of UWOC have spoken at May Day rallies for several years in the Bay Area. We have also participated in events like International Women's Day demonstrations in support of the Farm strike, and others—bringing our program to these events, showing our solidarity with other workers and supporting their demands.

UWOC has also taken part in the fight around the "energy crisis." Recently, members of UWOC spoke at a public hearing on utility cutbacks. We have been consistent allies of other workers fighting for their rights and opposed the effects of the energy crisis on workers. We have taken part in organizing and supporting strikes that have been ongoing in the Bay Area.

UWOC in the Bay Area: Its Struggle and Its Success

UWOC has been active in the Bay Area since its inception in 1941. Its early work focused on helping workers who had been laid off and to find new jobs. The organization continued to grow and expand its scope of work, eventually becoming the United Workers of California (UWOC). UWOC has since played a crucial role in the struggle for workers' rights in the Bay Area and beyond.

UWOC has been involved in many labor and civil rights issues, including the struggle for better working conditions, higher wages, and the right to unionize. The organization has also been active in the anti-war movement, advocating for peace and advocating against the Vietnam War.

UWOC has received support from a wide range of individuals and organizations, including labor unions, community groups, and political parties. The organization has also received funding from various sources, including government grants and private donations.

UWOC's work has been recognized for its contributions to the struggle for workers' rights in the Bay Area and beyond. The organization has received numerous awards and honors for its work, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Civil Rights Award and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) President's Award.

UWOC continues to be a vital force in the struggle for workers' rights, advocating for a better future for all workers in the Bay Area and beyond.

Met by Bayonets

Two months later, early June, when the 12,000 workers at North American decided to go out for a pay raise, Roosevelt refused to a man and received belated backing from the CIO. The Federal Government denied it had issued the order, but over the next three days, police in armored cars patrolled the area and the mass picket line. They failed and the company gave in.

The Allis-Chalmers strike was against the company's union-busting attempts to set up an AFL local in the plant.

Proclaiming that the strike hurt "national defense preparedness," the U.S. Government ordered the workers back to work. The result was a refusal to a man and received belated backing from the CIO. The Federal Government denied it had issued the order, but over the next three days, police in armored cars patrolled the area and the mass picket line. They failed and the company gave in.

The Allis-Chalmers and N.A.A.A. strikers to upset the reactionaries in the UAW leadership that, led by Walter Reuther, they launched a vicious red-baiting campaign at that fall's convention, which would be repeated throughout the labor movement over the next ten years. Allis Chalmers delegates were refused seating, and the North American strike was condemned by the AFL-CIO. On the last day, a resolution of the National Committee of Communist Party members holding UAW office was pulled through. Only the onset of WWII prevented the full unfolding of this conflict within the CIO in the following period.

The War, The Workers and The Party

On December 26, 1941, leaders of the A.F. of L., the CIO, and the Railroad Brotherhoods met in Washington, D.C. with Roosevelt and signed a pledge to refrain from any strikes for the duration of the war. For the whole next year they were able to maintain this, although contradictions appeared which would break into the open later.
Browder...

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pointed out that while it was necessary to ally with the bourgeois to a certain degree in the fight against Hitler and Hirohito, it was stupid to as-
sume that the capitalists would forget their self-inter-
est. If the workers couldn’t withdraw their labor through strikes, they would be powerless to fight the bosses’ increasing exploitation.

This, however, was just fine with the Browderite majority who didn’t “play the piano”—that is, make the war effort the main emphasis, but har-
monize the class struggle with it, rather than try to sup-
press it altogether. Instead, they chanted monotheism. “Everything is in the war.”

While corporate profits soared with juicy war con-
tracts and expanded production, inflation ate into the working class.

But the line of the Party hardly defended the workers’ interests. Harry Bridges, the longshore leader who followed the Party line at the time, said in May 1942: “To put it bluntly, I mean your unions today must become instruments of speed-up of the working people of America.”

Party leaders have come into practice to cloak the intro-
duction of “incentive pay”—“piecework”—into Red-led unions like the United Electrical Workers, where it exists to this day! And the CP also pushed a pro-business line of AF of L leaders ac-
cepted—that overtime pay be eliminated for the duration of the war.

UMW Withdraws from CIO

Another factor was coming into stay as 1942 began. John Lewis disagreed with the sub-
ordinance of the CIO leadership to Roosevelt. He proposed merger of the AF of L and CIO, and was sharply attacked by CIO President Murray, who had consulted with Roosevelt.

Lewis then intensified his policy of strengthen-
ing District 50, the UMW catch-all section for non-miners. In response, Mike Quill of the CIO Transportation Division, and at that time a member of the Communist Party, led an attack on N.Y. District 50 headquarters and smashed it up, arguing that Lewis was trying to sabotage the war effort.

Finally, in mid-1942, Lewis formally threw Murray out of the UMW and pulled the UMW out of the CIO. Although this gave the miners independence to carry out their 1943 strikes, it also cut them off from support and from the CIO rank and file. The bosses won 1943’s strikes inspired by other workers.

In April, 1943, the War Labor Board sided with the coal bosses against UMW demands for less overtime, better housing conditions, and a pay increase (food prices in mining towns had more than doubled since 1939). Thus, when their con-
tinued action on April 30, the mine workers, in Lewis’ words, ceased to “creep on the passaports of the coal operators.” After four days they went back in as a good will gesture while negotia-
tions proceeded.

The miners repeated the strike and “show of good will” cycle twice more before winning vic-
tory. They walked out June 1-7, June 19-22, and from late October to final victory on November 3. The 530,000 miners in three months faced down slanders that they were agents of Hitler, government threats to fire the miners, and the threat of sani-
ing in the Army. The miners’ answer was simple: “You can’t mine coal with bayonets, and they enjoyed tremendous support from rank & file unionists despite the attacks from the labor hacks.

Party Attacks Miners

It is to the disgrace of the CP that it took full part in these vicious attacks on the miners. On May 25, 1943, the Daily Worker said, “Lewis’ plan is to de-
stroy the labor movement and make it a front for the most sinister fascist anti-labor forces in the United States.” In mid-June Browder went to the Worker one better; the strike, he said, was “treason against the miners, against the labor movement, against our own country.” In fact, the Party sent its best organizers, including William Z. Foster, into the coal fields to agitate among the miners against Lewis and the strike. Lewis, it is true, was no real representative of the

INTERESTS OF THE WORKING CLASS.

He wanted to use the workers’ militancy and the CIO organizing for his own purposes, which were reformist at best, outright reactionary at worst. Not hampered by considerations of the international struggle of the working class, he carried his competitive battle with Roosevelt to the extreme of not giving a damn about whether he sabo-
naged the war effort against the fascists.

But the rank and file miners were not all a bunch of dupes of the fascists. They responded to Lewis’ leadership because they had grievances, because they, like the rest of the working class, were the vic-
tims of the drive of the capitalists to use the war to maximize profits. The line of the CP should have been to unite with this sentiment and give it correct leader-
ship.

Rather than denouncing and organizing against the miners’ strikes, which actually aided Lewis, the CP should have supported it, but “adjusted” it, (as Mao puts it) to protect the interests of the miners, while raising their consciousness about the real issues of the war—the struggle against fascism as part of the long-range struggle against imperialism.

In this way, the miners—and the working class as a whole—would have grasped even more firmly and felt even more deeply the need to make necessary sacrifices for the war effort, while at the same time not allowing the ruling capitalists an orgy of profit at their expense. And they would have grasped more firmly the need to fight the ruling class to vigorously pursue the war, and to break its ties, arrangements and agreements with the fascist enemy.

Heroic Role in Battle

The Party’s work at this time did not consist entirely of opposing sacrifices. From the entry of the U.S. into the war, Party members fought in the unions and the community with petitions, rallies and demon-
strations for the U.S. and Britain to open a second front in western Europe. Roosevelt and Churchill were stalling on it, to ensure that the Soviet Union took a great deal of punishment from the Nazis to weaken its ability to play a strong world role after the war. And on the battlefields, young Communists played a brilliant and heroic role, finishing the war as the most decorated group to be found in the whole army.

But as Browder fawned at the heels of the im-
perialists, the Party line got worse as 1943 ended. After the miners’ strikes ended in victory, and touched off further strikes among the workers, Roos-
eveld proposed a “national service act” which would draft all workers until the war was over, legally pre-
venting them from refusing any job, chasing jobs, turning down overtime, getting pay raises or striking. This, mind you, came at a time when corporate pro-
fits were at the highest levels in U.S. history! Virtually every labor leader in the country found it too much to swallow, and denounced it. The only backing Roosevelt got was from those union leaders close to the Party, like Emepack of the UE, Bridges and Curran from Maritime, and even they were forced to back off when they got the reaction of the rank and file. And since 1944 was an election year, FDR started to get discreet about it any ways.

By mid-1944, the “Teheran line” of Browder’s (see previous article, in Feb. issue) was in full effect. Brow-
der had also assassinated the New生命 Alert Pact, “If J.P. Morgan supports this coalition and goes down the line for it, I, as a Communist am prepared to clasp his hand and join with him to realize it.”

Browder’s “Teheran Line”

What Browder’s line meant for the working class was laid out even more clearly in his book, Teheran. The section on trade unions, for instance, praises Eric Johnston, President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and states a number of suggestions on how labor and capital can “coordinate peacefully” to improve the U.S. standard of living after the war. One way would be to open up more foreign markets!

And as the end of the war came into clear view, many Party members in the trade unions began to apply the Browder line concretely. By the fall of 1944, there were major strikes in many industrial shops around the country, and rank and file struggles to dump the no-strike agreement in both the UAW, where it won, and United Steelworkers, where dema-
gogy & political trickery defeated it. But Bridges, Curran and others proposed in their unions an “in-
definite no strike policy after the war.”

The effect of this line on workers and Party mem-
bers was published in the latter’s paper, The Daily Worker, in the Spring of 1945, a Party worker from Buffalo, Freda Werb, described what it had been like in early 1945: “Being faced with layoffs as we were, the discussion in the plant naturally was around what was going to happen to us after we were laid off and what kind of a post-war world we were going to live in. For months I stood there and talked to every-
one who would listen that in the postwar period our purchasing power would be greatly increased, that the capitalists would voluntarily pay us more money because they wanted to have a prosperous postwar world. I might say in passing that many wouldn’t listen, or have listened, laughed.”

This passage is the most devastating condemnation that could be made of the Left Browder line—Com-
munists forced to take positions so backward as to be laughed at by their fellow workers. The damage this did to the Party’s relationship to the working class would become grimly evident over the next few years, when the Party came under attack by the government and the agents of the ruling class in the leadership of the union.

It is important, however, to touch again on the lesson drawn at the beginning of this article. Browder could not bring about the Party’s and the UAW’s base-tos-
top fight against the Fascist aggression. In fact, he did it in 1944, and consolidated a full-
blown revisionist line.

How hard the road back up was to be will be the subject of the next article in this series.