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The Burning Question of Unity

We must state right in the beginning that the Communist Party objected to unity with the leaders of the former C. L. P. as well as with the LEADERS of the present so-called United Communist Party, for we consider these leaders to be centrists who intend to combine two incompatible teachings—Communism and Syndicalism (sometimes called in this country "industrialism").

The program adopted at the Second Convention of the Communist Party of Am. in its attitude toward trade and industrial unions is fully in keeping with the position taken on this question by the Second World Congress of the Communist International.

The United Communist Party at its first convention adopted a semi-syndicalist, semi-opportunist program. The attitude of the U. C. P. toward the old reactionary trade unions was thoroughly discussed at the 2nd Congress of the C. I. The Congress condemned this attitude of the U. C. P. and declared that the policy of deliberately splitting the A. F. of L. would endanger the Communist movement in America by isolating it from the organized labor movement as a whole.

This policy of the U. C. P. was severely criticized by both Karl Radek and Zinoviev who ridiculed these tactics, quoting directly from the U. C. P. program, and refusing to make any compromise on this question.

There was another vital question upon which the Communist Party could not agree with the centrist leaders of the U. C. P.—the question of propagating to the masses the necessity of armed insurrection and civil war for the purpose of overthrowing the capitalist state. The centrist leaders of the U. C. P. do not and did not deny the necessity for armed insurrection, but like other centrist parties, it gives its own interpretation of the meaning and content of armed insurrection. According to the written statement of the U. C. P. theoreticians, the proletariat should only resort to force of arms in the case of self-defense or self-protection. This theory will not hold water and entirely contradicts the actual historical facts based upon the experience of at least two proletarian revolutions.

The use of armed force thus should be considered, not only as a means of defense—as proposed by the centrist leaders of the U. C. P.—but also as a method of offense at the right moment—during an economic or political crisis,—and in this tactic the working class in the United States must be constantly and consistently educated as a vital part of communist propaganda.

The leaders of the U. C. P. go further in their effort to emasculate and to distort the meaning and to minimize the importance of this principle of communist tactics. The U. C. P. declare in their program, that; "...the working class must be prepared for armed insurrection as the final form of mass action by which the workers shall conquer the state power and establish the proletarian dictatorship."

Thus the leaders of the U. C. P. in both cases postpone the use of armed force indefinitely. Their policy, in this respect, reminds us of the action of the Mensheviks, the opportunists and centrists of all other countries, who use all their efforts to thwart the approach of the social revolution.

Let us now analyze the attitude of the centrist leaders of the U. C. P. toward the question of mass action.

The following paragraph of the U. C. P.

program reveals their position on this question. "It is through revolutionary mass action of the working class that the power of the capitalist state will be destroyed and the proletarian government established."

The program of the U. C. P. in its definition of mass action distorts the real meaning of this tactic; it is not in keeping with the actual facts. Mass action of the working class is a spontaneous act, usually provoked by the dissatisfaction of the proletarian masses with their economic conditions, or as a result of an economic crisis usually culminating in a sharpening of the class antagonism and class war. Spontaneous mass action of the working masses—even of a revolutionary character—as such is of no value, if it is not backed, directed and controlled by the most class-conscious part of the proletariat, i.e. if it is not directed and controlled by the proletarian vanguard, the Communist Party. The Soviets in Russia, after the March revolution, were revolutionary in their character. BUT WHILE THEY WERE LED BY THE MENSHEVIKI AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTIONISTS, i.e. BY THE YELLOW SOCIAL PATRIOTS AND CENTRISTS, THEY HAD NO INFLUENCE AND WERE DEVOID OF POWER. They attained this power and influence only when the leadership of the Soviets came into the hands of the Bolsheviks or Communists. The mighty power of the Soviets in Russia is due to the influence of the proletarian vanguard in their midst.

The destruction of the capitalist state and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in the form of Soviet government will be carried out by means of revolutionary mass action of the working class under the leadership and control of the proletarian vanguard, i.e. of a disciplined, mighty, Communist Party. Such a Communist Party can never be built up by the leaders of the U. C. P. with their non-communist misconceptions and their centrist tendencies.

These are briefly the essential points which have separated the Communist Party and the U. C. P. up to the Second Congress of the Communist International. It is obvious that these differences are of vital importance. These two parties disagreed in their attitude toward trade and industrial unions.

At the conventions in Chicago both the U. C. P. and the C. L. P. suffered from the "infantile sickness of 'left' communism" as Lenin aptly called it. Both parties insisted that the A. F. of L. and similar unions must be split up and that in their place should be organized brand-new "revolutionary" unions built on an industrial basis. But the Communist Party of America at its first convention in Chicago, definitely and clearly explained the role and the importance of the vanguard of the proletariat,—of a political party as distinct from the working class as a whole—it clearly presented the role of the Communist Party as the leading and directing force in the proletarian mass action. The Program, adopted by the Communist Party at its first convention, pointed out with absolute clearness, that the political party must be the guide of the working masses, that the Communist Party must not isolate itself from the masses if it does not wish to be more than a pitiful political sect.

In contradiction to this otherwise clear conception of its function as a political party of the working class, the Communist Party was inconsistent in its attitude toward

the trade and industrial unions at its September 1st Convention.

The COMMUNIST LABOR PARTY, was launched under the direct influence of the syndicalist elements at its first convention in Chicago, and had no clear understanding of the vital importance of a proletarian political party nor of its role in the proletarian revolution. All the leaders of the C. L. P. laid more stress upon the purely economic movement of the working class. They upheld the I. W. W. as against the A. F. of L. According to the leaders of the Communist Labor Party a political party was of less importance than the economic organizations of the working class in their struggle against the capitalist class and the capitalist state.

In spite of the fact that the C. L. P. formally and in words recognized the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it had no clear conception of the importance of the role of the political party of the working class before and during the revolutionary period—before the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and at the time of and after the seizure of state power by the workers.

At the first convention of the Communist Party some few syndicalist elements joined it through misunderstanding; they exercised a slight influence in the shaping of our first program thus making our attitude toward the trade unions vague and indefinite. These syndicalist elements of the Damon and Caxton type showed themselves in their true colors at the time when differences first arose in the C. E. C. of our party last year. The most essential differences between the "minority" and majority of the C. E. C. of the C. P. of A. consisted in the misconception of the so-called minority of the distinction between the masses and the party. According to the opinions of the "minority" PARTY and CLASS are identical.

Damon and Caxton and kindred elements in the Communist Party were imbued with opportunist and syndicalist ideas which obscured in their minds the importance of the role of the political party before, during, and after the conquest of state power by the proletariat. On the other hand, Damon, Caxton and Co. had menshevik and opportunist tendencies which appeared in their attitude toward mass action and the question of armed insurrection.

After DAMON, CAXTON, & CO. left our party and united with their Siamese twin brothers, the COMMUNIST LABOR PARTY, thereby artificially creating the "UNITED" COMMUNIST PARTY. The program of this "UNITED" party, which is composed of elements that never should have been separated, has been sufficiently criticized in this article. The syndicalist ideology prevails throughout it, while at the same time it is accompanied by opportunism of the worst kind.

Damon, Caxton and Co. in spite of all their machinations did not succeed in their attempt to destroy the Communist Party, since only an insignificant number of our members followed in their footsteps. Disappointed in their attempt to destroy the only consistent and true proletarian party—the Communist Party of America—and aware that the "UNITED" Communist Party had miserably failed to unite the communist elements in this country upon their non-communist program, Damon, Caxton, Holt, & Co. began to scheme and to adopt other measures to break the C. P. of A.