

The Perspective of a Labor Party

The perspective of coming mass struggles involves the question of developing these struggles in a political direction and unifying them in a centralized form. The movement for a Labor Party is today at low ebb as a result primarily of the passivity of the workers and the decline in movements of struggle in the past period. The coming period of developing economic struggles will very probably be reflected in tendencies toward the revival of the Labor Party movement.

It is not reasonable to expect that the masses of the American workers, who are still tied ideologically and politically to the bourgeois Parties, will come over to the Communist Party politically at one step in a period not immediately revolutionary. All past experience, and particularly the recent experiences in the mining, textile and needle trades industries, where the workers who supported Communist leadership in strikes did not vote for the Communist ticket, do not sustain such expectations. The perspective of a Labor Party, as a primary step in the political development of the American workers, adopted by the Party in 1922 after a sharp struggle in the Party and at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, holds good today, although the forms and methods of its realization will be somewhat different than those indicated at that time.

It is therefore necessary to keep this perspective of a Labor Party before the eyes of the Party and the working class. We speak here not for the immediate formation of such a Party and surely not for the adventurism and opportunism that has characterized this work in the past, particularly in the organization of fake Labor Parties that had no genuine mass basis. The Labor Party must have a mass basis and must arise out of struggle and be formed in the process of struggle. To this end, the propaganda slogan must be really revived, and as soon as it has found roots in the masses and their experiences in the struggle, it must become an agitational, and finally an action slogan.

The Labor Party must not be an enlarged shadow of the Communist Party. It must have a mass basis, else it will be a caricature. It must permit the freedom of action, independence and criticism of the revolutionary elements within it. It must not have an exaggerated importance attributed to it as the "leader" of the working class to liberation, and so on, for no illusions about its role can be permitted except at the expense of the revolutionary interests of the working class. It must not be based on individual membership.

The organization of two classes in one Party,—a Farmer-Labor Party—must be rejected in principle in favor of the separate organization of the workers, and the formation of a political alliance with the poor farmers under the leadership of the former. The opportunist errors of Party comrades in the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota and other states flowed inevitably from, and were secondary to the basically false policy of a two-class Party, pursued by the Party leadership, in which farmer and worker are ostensibly on an "equal basis," but where in reality the petty bourgeois ideology of the former actually dominates.

The struggle for a Labor Party, as part of the struggle for the development of a class movement of the American workers, requires an intransigent fight against the A. F. of L. leadership and the Socialist Party who represent obstacles to this development. The main base of the future Labor Party will be the new industrial unions formed in the coming struggles against the employers, the government and the labor fakers and reformists. The Left Wing, organized in the old unions, will also play a very important part. The radicalizing effect of these struggles and the circumstances which give rise to them will create the conditions for the formation of the Labor Party and for the effective participation of the Communists and their independent struggle for leadership of the masses.

Work Among Negroes

The Party as a whole has always greatly underestimated the tremendous importance of revolutionary work among the Negro masses. The American Negroes are destined to play a great role in the coming revolution. The Negro proletariat in the North, and the great mass of Negro peasantry in the South form a tremendous reservoir of revolutionary force, which has hitherto remained un-

tapped. What is needed is a recognition of the importance of this work, a correct policy in it and serious attention to it.

It must be the main task of the Party in this field to mobilize the white workers to fight for the rights of the Negro masses to full social, economic and political equality and to unite with them in their struggles. Not an attitude of liberal paternalism, but an attitude of comradely support in a common battle, will give an impetus to the movement of struggle and resistance among the Negroes and will pave the way for the expansion of Party influence among them. The organization of the Negro masses for struggle goes hand in hand with the mobilization of the white workers for the defense of the Negroes against persecution and discrimination.

A prerequisite for this is the persistent struggle against race prejudice (white chauvinism) which is sedulously cultivated by the ruling class and dominates large sections of the white workers. It is even reflected in certain sections of the Party. This can be rooted out only by a broad ideological campaign explaining the reactionary, anti-working class origin, nature and result of the bourgeois "theories" of "white supremacy," and utilizing every concrete instance in this sense. Such a campaign has not yet even been begun in our Party press. The attempt to deal with the question by purely mechanical methods is false.

The Negro question is also a national question, and the Party must raise the slogan of the right of self-determination for the Negroes. The effectiveness of this slogan is enhanced by the fact that there are scores of contiguous counties in the South where the Negro population is in the majority, and it is there that they suffer the most violent persecution and discrimination. This slogan will be the means especially of penetrating these Negro masses in the South and of mobilizing them for revolutionary struggle. The Party must at the same time decisively reject the false slogan of a "Negro Soviet Republic in the South" at this time, raised by Pepper. This theory is still being propagated in the Party press and in official Party literature despite its rejection even at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern.

The work among the Negro masses must from the very beginning be based on leadership by the Negro proletariat and not by the Negro petty-bourgeoisie. The Party's orientation in the past has been based more on the latter than the former. Only through the domination by the Negro proletariat in the movement will the Party be able to advance the work of organizing the Negro peasants, tenant farmers, share croppers, etc., in the South in an effective and revolutionary sense.

The Stalinization of the American Party

The departure of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from the line of Lenin has been reflected in the Communist International and all of its sections. The Stalinization of the Comintern, which is the evil fruit of the demagogic and unscrupulous struggle of the Stalin-Bucharin revisionists against the Bolshevik Opposition led by Trotsky is represented by opportunist politics and a bureaucratic internal regime in the Comintern and in the Parties. Stalinization has brought about an enormous and absolutely unprecedented bureaucratization in the apparatus.

The weaknesses of the Communist International and its National sections and the faction struggles which undermine them flow directly from the faction struggle in the Russian Communist Party. Stalinization carries schism and disintegration into all the Parties. This is the main source of the evils in our Party. A recognition of this fact is the only key to the understanding of our Party problems and the organization of a Communist fight to solve them. The struggle for the regeneration of our Party, for the correction of its policies and the formation of a proletarian-Communist leadership, is an international fight. All attempts to wage this fight on purely national grounds, within the framework of Stalinist "legality," are unprincipled and futile.

The direct responsibility of the Stalinist faction for the Lovestone-Pepper regime in our Party and all its corrupting consequences is clearly demonstrated by the facts of Party history in recent years.

This leadership was established in the Party in 1925 by cable of the E.C.C.I. plus the jesuitical machinations of Gussev, the representative of the

E.C.C.I., after it had twice been decisively rejected by the Party membership. Again in 1927 a cable from the E.C.C.I. prohibited a majority in the Central Committee (the bloc of Cannon-Weinstone-Foster groups) from exercising their right to reorganize the Polcom and elect Party officers; thus safeguarding the Lovestone control. The "Supplementary Decision" cabled to the Party later in 1927 called upon the Party to support the Lovestone group after the E.C.C.I. had been compelled to reject its main line.

Further help in mobilizing the Party for the Lovestone faction was given a little later by cables hypocritically protesting against the "factionalism" of the Opposition while ignoring and condoning the most criminal and corrupt factional practices of the Lovestone group. Ewert, present leader of the "conciliators" group in the German Party, in his capacity as representative of the C.I. to our Party in 1927, helped the Lovestone faction to gerrymander and steal the Party Convention in Tammany fashion. The secretarial decision of the E.C.C.I. after the Sixth World Congress in 1928 ignored all the big political questions and simply declared the contentions that the Lovestone leadership follows a right wing line (which were proven to the hilt in the Opposition document on "The Right Danger in the American Party") to be unfounded and thus again indicated its political support of this faction.

By all these means, by political pressure, by direct organizational interference, by abusing the confidence of the Party members in the Communist International, by tricks and machinations, the Centrist leadership of the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern has strengthened and supported its American counterpart and entrenched its control in the American Party.

This Stalinization of the Party has reduced the dues-paying membership from 16,325 in 1925 (Convention report January-June) to 7,277 in 1928 (Financial reports January-August), in a three-year period which offered abundant possibilities for the Party to grow. It has brought about a particularly heavy loss of native American and trade union elements, reducing the proportion of such elements in the Party, always far too small, to insignificance. Party democracy does not exist. There is far less freedom of expression in the Party today, working under legal conditions and during a pre-convention discussion period, than there was normally in the underground, illegal Party. Bureaucratization has become a cancer eating out the Party life. The class composition of the Party has deteriorated and the main sections of the Party leadership, its decisive upper strata, are predominantly petty-bourgeois. Permanent factionalism rages in the Party year in and year out and absorbs its main energies. The whole course of disruption and disintegration is being crowned now by the wholesale expulsion of the Opposition—proletarian Communists, founders of the Party and its most loyal, reliable and tested militants.

Self-Criticism

The "self-criticism" of the ruling faction consists in making tardy admissions of the least significant of the errors they committed, without indicating any connection between them, or the basis upon which they arose. The important and more dangerous mistakes committed by them are "admitted" only under the most severe pressure, and even then, in most cases, they are falsely ascribed to the opponents of the very errors. The nature of the errors, the reasons and responsibility for them, are never established. The result is that they are either repeated in the same form, or else they are repeated in an inverted form caused by irresponsible swings to the opposite extreme.

A genuine Leninist self-criticism is a primary prerequisite for the establishment of clarity, the raising of the ideological level of the Party and the elimination of the distrust and cynicism caused by its absence. Instead of self-criticism, the Party leadership has instituted a regime of diplomacy, concealment, distortion, and self-praise. Its own "achievements" are paraded and exaggerated in the most revolting shopkeeper's manner. A blank check of immunity from any error or crime is an automatic premium to any of its faction supporters.

In this poisonous atmosphere the disparity between words and deeds grows greater every day. Resolutions, theses and motions are made primarily for the record and not to be carried out. They remain on paper in the Party archives to be pointed to only to justify this or that action, after the

fact. They are carried out only insofar as they are in harmony with the temporary, opportunist interests of the leadership. The absolute impossibility of making the deed conform with the word in the present situation lies in the fact that any correction of Party line or improvement of its condition can be made only in the sharpest struggle against the present Party leadership. Since the present leadership is exclusively interested in its self-preservation at all costs, the word remains a hollow, farcical gesture.

Party Democracy

The absence of any genuine self-criticism in the Party goes hand in hand with the growing bureaucratization of the leadership and functionary staff of the Party, its deproletarianization, and the increasing lack of workers' democracy in the ranks.

The wholesale expulsion of proletarian fighters goes hand in hand with the steady recruitment of all kinds of dubious petty-bourgeois careerist and half-baked intellectual elements. The class composition of the Party, particularly in the New York district where almost half of the Party membership is concentrated, has been seriously affected by this process in recent years and has had a direct expression in the opportunist policies of the Party and the strengthening of the opportunist elements generally.

In the upper circles of the Party, in the Party apparatus, this increased proportion of non-proletarians is enormously expanded. Under the Lovestone regime these elements are appearing more and more on all sides as Party representatives, officials, managers, directors, teachers, supervisors. Coming to these positions without sufficient prerequisites, they bring with them the detestable careerist attributes of insolence, arrogance and pride of office, antagonizing and alienating the worker elements and thrusting them aside.

Accompanying this is the alarming growth of the tendency to replace in various positions those comrades who have built and worked in the Party since its formation with those who have only recently joined the movement from the Socialist Party, the Zionist movement, liberals, etc., etc.

The Party must examine these questions in direct connection with the struggle against the Right danger and the opportunist leaders who are its bearer. It is necessary at once to take a complete registration of the Party membership with the object of precisely determining its class composition. A reorganization of the Party apparatus, from top to bottom, up to and including the Central Executive Committee, placing the overwhelming majority of the positions in the hands of experienced and tested Party workers of proletarian origin, must be effected at once. In this connection, the Party must reject categorically the gross mockery of proletarianization which the Lovestone-Pepper group is carrying out. It consists of the formal addition to certain Party committees of unknown comrades who are never intended to function in the committees except to serve as proletarian window-dressing behind which the opportunists and petty-bourgeois careerists can work with greater security. For the next period, until a proletarian stabilization has been achieved in the Party and its apparatus, the Party membership must be closed entirely to non-proletarian elements. Even then their admittance into the Party must be strictly supervised.

An analysis of the number of comrades employed in the apparatus (in the Party national and district offices, in the Party press and their administration, in the large number of auxiliary organizations, in the numerous cooperative institutions, etc., etc.) will reveal the striking fact that the Party has a staff of paid functionaries and technical workers equal to more than 10 per cent. of the Party membership who are not employed in industry or in agriculture. This bureaucratic crust is smothering the Party.

The fight for the Party is a fight against the systematic opportunist policy of the leadership and the bureaucratic regime with which it fortifies itself against control and correction from below. This internal regime is tied up with the external opportunist line and is an expression of it. A serious struggle for a correction of the opportunist external policy which weakens the Party and consequently the class before their enemies is impossible without the most determined, stubborn and relentless fight for Party democracy. Party democracy is the means whereby the policy of the Party can be corrected and its leadership reorganized on a proletarian-Communist basis.

The raising of the issue of Party democracy and

the education of the Party membership on its meaning and significance are made all the more necessary by the confusion that prevails on the whole question of Party government, of forms of working class organization, of centralization and discipline. This confusion is fostered by the monstrous distortions of Lenin's teachings disseminated by the Party leadership and is the direct result of them.

The present leaders and "teachers" of the Party distort and misapply these conceptions. They totally neglect to take up this burning problem at all in their respective faction theses. They substitute the idea of discipline in the formal mechanical sense for the Leninist doctrine of democratic centralism. Our Party which ought to be the champion of Workers' Democracy throughout the entire labor movement is making the very word taboo. All democracy is indiscriminately labelled bourgeois democracy. Party democracy, of course, does not exclude but presupposes centralization and discipline. It is just the bureaucratic distortions and mechanical conceptions of discipline which give rise to syndicalist prejudices in this respect.

The Party must make an end of this situation by struggle against the leadership that fosters and expresses it. The first step is to break down the disruptive expulsion policy and to reinstate the expelled Communists with the right to express their views in the Party by normal means. The policy of administrative gagging, suppression and terrorism must be overthrown. The worker Communist must be able to feel at home in his own Party. He must have the right and feel the freedom to open his mouth and say what he thinks without being called into the office of some petty official or other, like a recalcitrant workman in a factory, and threatened with discipline. All talk of Party democracy in the face of suppression on all sides and the wholesale expulsion of comrades for their views is a swindle.

Americanization in the Bolshevik Sense

As a result primarily of historical conditions the American Communist movement was from the beginning predominantly a movement of foreign-born workers, whose revolutionary and socialist traditions had a European background. Their passage to Communism was fundamentally a reaction to events in Europe, above all the Russian proletarian revolution, and this reaction was not closely connected with the class struggle in the United States. In its formative years the Party stood aloof to a very large extent from the great mass struggles of that time—the steel strike, the general strike of the miners, and so on, and did not recruit its forces from them. The Left wing in the Socialist Party and the Communist Party into which it evolved were dominated by foreign language Federations. The "American" leaders, for the most part, were the "English expression" of this movement.

This anomalous situation imparted to the early movement an unrealistic and extremely sectarian character and caused deep internal contradictions and struggles. The long struggle against Federation domination and the Federation form of organization, although formally an organization question, was fundamentally a political struggle for the Americanization of the movement. It was closely bound up with the struggle against sectarianism: for a realistic trade union policy, for "legal" activities and a legal Party, for the Labor Party and for the predominance of American workers in the leadership.

This character of the Party and its leadership in the formative years militated against its effective participation in the class struggle and greatly weakened its recruiting power among the American revolutionary workers. The I.W.W. movement of that time which was a great reservoir for Communism and a large part of the natural base for an American Communist movement was not attracted, and the anti-Communist strategy of the reactionary anarcho-syndicalist leaders was greatly facilitated. The Party failed likewise, for these reasons, to recruit thousands of revolutionary-minded American Workers in the Socialist Party and in the Left Wing of the trade unions.

The violent internal struggles were called forth by the contradictions between the composition, tactics and leadership of the Party and the conditions for its existence and effective functioning in the class struggle. The struggle of a minority to overcome these contradictions, in which the

present Opposition was in the forefront from the very beginning, received powerful support from the Communist International, particularly in 1921 and 1922. The new course of the Party, its emergence from the underground, its adoption of a realistic trade union policy and its participation in the Labor Party movement, were the result of this struggle. The recruitment of native workers and active trade unionists began, and, particularly under the leadership established at the 1923 Convention, developed progressively.

The disruption of the leadership and the alteration of the course of the Party in 1925 halted this development, and the past-three years has seen a retrogression. The proportion of native workers in the Party and its decisive leadership today is insignificant and the recruiting power of the Party among these elements has greatly declined. Even in great mass struggles like that of the miners, the Party is unable to gain, and still less to keep, any considerable number of new members of this type. It remains primarily a Party of foreign-born workers with its decisive working class membership narrowing more and more to the needle trades. This state of affairs, bound up with the problem of Party policy and leadership, is fatal for the growth of the Party as a factor in the class struggle in America.

It is necessary to state these facts openly and fearlessly and to insist on a change of course in the most resolute manner. The new course for the Americanization of the Party in the Communist sense must be adopted. Conscious, deliberate and systematic efforts must be made in all class struggle activities by every member of the Party to attract native workers into the Party and into its leadership in all of its spheres. The selection of Party representatives, the methods of approach, and so on, must be decisively influenced by this aim. There must be a simplification and popularization of propaganda and agitational work. Far greater attention to simple, modest tasks of a movement in its elementary stage of development. Greater responsibility and concentration on main struggles and activities, and less sensation-mongering, less pretentiousness, bombast, exaggeration, fake campaigns and "high politics." Use of language comprehensible to the American workers and more related to their traditions.

The problem is to unite the inspiration of the Russian revolution, which is and has been the strongest influence in the revolutionary wing of the American labor movement, with a realistic approach to the specific tasks of the American Communists. This now applies especially to the defenders of the Russian Opposition which is the representative of the victory of the Russian October. This unity will be the means of permeating the American workers with the spirit of Internationalism while strengthening and developing the Communist influence in the class struggle in America.

The efforts made in the past to pervert the revolutionary essence of this program to adapt the Party to its specific tasks have only served to justify the present composition of the Party and the laxness in improving it, but have in no sense invalidated the correctness of our proposals which are as vital today as ever, if not more so.

The Party, the Groups and our Perspectives

The Party today is in the throes of a factional crisis which has raged continuously since 1925. This factional struggle, which the E.C.C.I. frequently declared "has no basis in principle" is the product of the Stalinization of the Party and the imposition upon it from above of an artificial and incompetent leadership. At bottom this struggle, which numerous "unanimous" resolutions could not stop and which broke out afresh after each proclamation of "unity," has been a conflict between the proletarian and the petty-bourgeois tendencies.

As a result of the failure to understand the struggle in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which is the main source of the factional situation in our Party, the proletarian tendency has made numerous mistakes and has not always been able to formulate the issues clearly, since this could be done only with an international orientation and perspective.

The ruling faction in the Party on the other hand was strengthened by its international connection with the Stalin-Bucharin regime and received direct and continuous support from it. The Lovestone-Pepper faction is an American replica of