

New Developments and New Tasks in the U.S.A.

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NOTE: *This article was originally prepared for publication in November, which accounts for the date of the statistics. The analysis and the forecast have, however, been brought up to date, making the article basic guiding material, along with the Central Committee Resolution printed in this issue, for the carrying out of the main tasks of our Party today.*—EDITORS.

I. THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

THE third year of the depression, following the lowest point of the economic crisis reached in 1932, completely bears out the characterization of the depression as a "depression of a special kind which does not lead to a new boom and flourishing industry, but which, on the other hand, does not force it back to the lowest point of decline".

The short-lived spurt upward of industrial production in the first months of Roosevelt's administration (April-July, 1933), was quickly cancelled by the declines of the last months of the year, while 1934, beginning also with a rise in production, is also ending on the downgrade which more than wipes out all gains in the first part. The zig-zag line representing the high and low points of the depression is indicated in the following figures:

1929 average	100	
July, 1932	50	
November, 1932	58	
March, 1933	51	(Based on Federal Reserve Bank index.)
July, 1933	82	
December, 1933	60	
July, 1934	72	
October, 1934	60	

November figures will, probably, bring the index down below the November of 1932, the date on which Roosevelt was elected president two years ago. It would be hard to find signs of recovery in these figures.

The above quoted figures show not only the present difficulties hindering the going out of the economic crisis on the basis of the mobilization of the inner forces of capitalism, but on the whole they reflect the results of the economic policies of the N.R.A. and

New Deal. These policies have not succeeded in keeping industrial production above the level already reached under Hoover. It is true that Roosevelt's 40 per cent inflation of the dollar created a four-month inflation "boom", but this ended at the same moment that the N.R.A. with its system of industrial codes was established, and almost all those gains from inflation are again wiped out.

A sober estimate from the point of view of finance capital, from the *Business Bulletin* of the Cleveland Trust Company (Nov. 15), is the following:

"All the advance of the earlier months of this year has been cancelled, and most of the advance of last year."

The financial journal, *The Annalist*, (Oct. 19, 1934), speaking of the September figures, declared editorially:

"This is the lowest level reached by this index since April 1933. Only in the worst months . . . from April 1932 to April 1933, has this index stood at a lower level. . . ."

And concludes:

"We are entering the sixth year of depression with business activity almost at its extreme depth."

Employment, wages and earnings have all declined for the working class as a whole, during Roosevelt's regime. Official statistics on employment show an increase, but this is accomplished by spreading part-time work (which is no increase in employment for the working class) and by listing as employed the workers forced to render labor services of non-productive character in return for unemployment relief. Official statistics show an increase in wage scales, but this is in terms of the dollar, which has itself been depreciated 40 per cent, so that real wages have actually declined. Weekly earnings of workers have declined even more than real wages, due to the shortening of working time through the spread-the-work system. Even the organ of finance, *The Annalist*, is forced to admit this (Oct. 26) when it says:

"Factory employment, seasonally adjusted, was slightly lower than last December, though factory payrolls were slightly higher. If, however, allowance is made for higher living costs, the real wages of factory workers were no higher than last December."

Such conservative sources as Hopkins, national relief director, and William Green, president of the A. F. of L., have publicly admitted that this winter will bring the largest relief lists ever before seen in America. More than 20,000,000 people will be directly

dependent upon relief, while an additional 20,000,000 will be supported by relatives, friends, and their own last accumulations. A total of 40,000,000, or 30 per cent of the population, will be without normal current income.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NATIONAL ELECTION RESULTS

Results of the national Congressional elections on November 6, which greatly strengthened Roosevelt's control of Congress, were generally interpreted (both in the U.S. and abroad) as showing a big wave of mass sentiment in support of Roosevelt and the New Deal. This interpretation will not, however, stand up under analysis.

Total votes cast declined under the figure of 1932, by over 10,000,000. This mass abstention from the polls was greater than in normal times, indicating mass dissatisfaction with the programs of the major parties.

This mass abstention was even greater among the followers of the Democratic Party than among those of the Republican Party. While the Republican vote declined by 3,000,000, the Democratic vote declined 7,000,000.

Despite their greater loss of votes, the Democrats increased their strength in Congress. This is because, wherever it appeared that the Republicans had a chance of election, there usually the abstentionism was overcome—the votes turned out to *defeat the Republicans*. That is, large masses were supporting Roosevelt on the theory of "the lesser evil", in spite of their discontent, disillusionment, and even a growing, though vague, mass radicalization.

This mood among the masses was even more sharply and clearly expressed whenever it had the opportunity to rally around candidates, factions or new party formations which appeared before the masses as being "to the Left" of Roosevelt, and which yet did not, in the estimation of the masses, represent a revolutionary departure from the present system. Wherever such "Left" alternatives to Roosevelt were offered, they gained unprecedented mass support. We need mention only four outstanding examples among a great number of lesser ones:

1. Upton Sinclair, with his EPIC program, running on the Democratic ticket, with his promise to "end poverty" without disturbing capitalism, received 800,000 votes out of a total of 2,000,000, and was defeated only by the intervention of the Roosevelt administration against the California Democrats in favor of the Republican candidate.

2. Huey Long retained control of the Louisiana Democratic Party, against the Roosevelt administration, on a program of a two-

year moratorium on debts, taxation of the circulation of the capitalist daily newspapers, struggle against the bankers, etc., and legalized for the next two years his one-man dictatorship of the state.

3. The LaFollette brothers in Wisconsin, sons of the late leader of the third-party movement of 1924, split away from the Republican Party, established an entirely new party (called "Progressive"), and carried all important state and congressional posts in the elections.

4. Floyd Olson, heading the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota, carried the state with an increased majority, on a vague but radical-sounding platform calling for "the cooperative commonwealth".

In these events we have the characteristic feature of the November elections. Without being prepared as yet to come out in support of a revolutionary challenge to the capitalist system, the masses were seeking something new, something more radical, something which promised more definitely relief from their miseries. They rejected decisively all appeals of the Republican Party to return to the era of Hoover, appeals based upon the traditions of the two-party system in America—that discontented masses always vote out the party in power and put its established rival in office again. Where they had no other alternative, they apathetically, without enthusiasm, supported Roosevelt as the "lesser evil". Where a "progressive" faction or party emerged, it at once gained enthusiastic mass support.

We must conclude from the elections that among the broad masses strong currents to the Left have begun. These currents have already paralyzed the normal operation of the old two-party system, begin to present manifestations of its break up, of mass desertion of the old capitalist parties, and indicate the probability that in 1936, with the continued absence of economic recovery, with continued prolonged depression, there will emerge a mass party in opposition to and to the Left of Roosevelt.

III. SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THE ELECTIONS

The Socialist Party vote in the elections was, on the whole, stagnant. In a few localities it succeeded in becoming the "progressive" opposition, and elected state legislators in Pennsylvania and Connecticut. Its national vote will probably fall below that of 1932. (Information on the smaller party votes is not yet completely available.) This stagnant condition was primarily due to its inner condition, which was one of partial paralysis, resulting from a deepening division which has split the party into two main warring camps—one, which wants to take the Party to the Right and merge in the Progressive movement, and the other, which moves to the Left under the general influence of the Communist

united front activities, and a part of which operates under the slogan of united front with the Communist Party.

The Communist Party vote increased over 1932 by 80 to 100 per cent. The total will be about 225,000. (These figures do not take into account exceptionally large votes for individual candidates, like the 80,000 votes for Anita Whitney in California, but only that cast for the whole or major portion of the Party ticket.) In New York City the vote increased from 26,000 to 45,000; in Ohio, from 8,000 to 14,000; in California from 8,000 to 24,000. In Arizona, the C.P. came second, the comparative vote being: Democratic—45,000; Communist—11,300; Republican—2,500.

In a number of small communities in the mining area of Illinois, the Communist and Socialist workers put up Workers' Tickets on a united front basis; in Taylor Springs, such a ticket was elected to office, including most of the county posts. In Trumbull County, Ohio, a united front between the local Socialist and Communist Parties, which had been formed in a series of struggles, was carried over into the elections, in a joint appeal to the workers to vote for the Socialist local ticket, and for the Communist state ticket (this was facilitated by the fact that the C.P. was not on the local ballot, while the S.P. was absent from the state ballot).

In general, neither the Socialist nor Communist Parties succeeded in engaging in its support the masses who were tending to break away from the two traditional capitalist parties. In the case of the S.P. this is to be attributed primarily to its inner contradictions, to its inability to make up its mind decisively in what direction it wishes to go. In the case of the Communist Party, the subjective weaknesses of insufficient contact with these masses, remnants of sectarian approach, are supplemented by the still low degree of consciousness among the Leftward moving masses, the main part of which is by no means prepared as yet to go boldly upon the path for the revolutionary solution of the crisis, which was given major emphasis by the C.P. during the election campaign.

IV. THE STRIKE MOVEMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE C.P.

The major manifestation of radicalization of the working class was, in 1934, the strike movement, which has already involved well over 2,000,000 workers this year, has taken on political character in the growth of general strike sentiment and actions, and represents the strongest revolutionary upsurge seen in America since the first post-War period.

These strike actions, in their great majority, were carried through under the banner of the American Federation of Labor. This already is a great change from 1931-32, when most strike struggles

were initiated and led directly by the independent revolutionary unions; and even from 1933, when the strike movement was initiated by the Red unions, which led the first successful strikes in the crisis period, in auto, mining, textile, steel, and other industries, and in which the A. F. of L. only came into the strike movement later, when its membership surged out of its control under the influence of the successful strikes led by the Red unions.

In 1934, the Red unions definitely passed into the background in the basic industries, and to some extent also in light industry. The main mass of workers had definitely chosen to try to organize and fight through the A. F. of L. organizations, even though that meant also struggle against the official top leadership.

The chief feature of the strike wave was the sudden crystallization of a movement for general strike and solidarity strike actions. The first important movement of this sort came in Toledo, Ohio, in May, when a small strike in an auto-equipment factory, on the verge of defeat, was suddenly brought to life again by the surging onto the picket line of ten thousand sympathetic workers, mostly unemployed, who had responded to a call by the Unemployment Councils led by the Communists. The mass picket line, continuing for some days, was attacked by state troops, one worker killed, many wounded, hundreds gassed and arrested. The response to this attack was a vote in every union in the city on the question of an immediate general strike; out of 91 unions, 83 voted for the strike. Before the hour set for the general strike, the employers and union leaders hastily patched up a settlement of the strike, granting the striking workers some of their demands and giving guarantees against victimization.

Within a week or two of the Toledo events, a similar solidarity movement took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in support of the teamsters' strike, where also lives were lost, where masses came onto the streets and took possession of them, and where also the general strike was only prevented by a hastily conceived settlement which could be paraded before the workers as a victory.

Again within a few weeks, a strike of street car workers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which seemed about to be broken, was suddenly made 100 per cent effective by the surging onto the streets of 40,000 workers, who prevented a single street car from moving. Again the use of violence against the workers, and the killing of a picket, so roused the masses that a general strike vote swept through the unions; within 12 hours the threat of general strike had secured the granting of most of the demands of the original strike and a quick settlement with the union.

During all this period of May, and on into June, the Pacific

Coast marine workers (longshoremen, sailors, and harbor workers) had been carrying on their general industrial strike over a 2,000-mile stretch of coastline. Early in July, the employers decided to smash the strike by violence, attacking the pickets on the streets of San Francisco, and killing two of them, one a member of our Party. Again the masses responded; at the funeral, 100,000 workers took possession of the main streets of the city. A general strike vote swept through the unions. The Central Labor Union leadership, which had been standing firmly against the general strike, suddenly changed front when they saw the movement going over their heads, came out for the general strike and took the leadership of it, and then proceeded in four days to betray the strike, hoping in crushing the general strike to smash at the same time the marine strike which was under revolutionary leadership.

For four days, however, the City of San Francisco was in the hands of the workers, until the strike committee itself had step by step surrendered the strategic positions and then called off the strike. Only the betrayal of the San Francisco general strike stopped the development of general strikes in Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington.

This wave of local general strike movements and solidarity mass actions is unprecedented in modern American labor history. I will not go into an analysis of these strikes, their strength and weakness, the role of the C.P. in them, etc. This has been done at some length in a special resolution of our Central Committee which has been discussed and approved in the Comintern.

What is important here to establish, is the characteristic of the passing over of even small economic struggles into great political class battles; of the engaging of entire communities in solidarity actions; of the winning of factory strikes by means of the solidarity actions of the unemployed; of the growth of class consciousness and the feeling of class power among the workers, the breaking down of fears and hesitations, the prompt mass responses to go on the streets as the answer to police and military violence.

Within six weeks after the ending of the San Francisco strike, came the great general strike of the textile workers, involving about 400,000 workers. This again was the expression of a great upsurge from below; the strike was forced by the membership against the wish of their leaders; when the strike call was issued, it was met with response far beyond the limits of the organized textile workers, tens of thousands of unorganized workers streaming into the union during the period of strike; entirely new forms of mass action were spontaneously developed from below, outstanding among which were the so-called "flying squadrons", consisting of 50 to 100

motor cars full of strikers going from town to town to call out on strike the mills still working, and which met with tremendous successes.

Troops were called out in eleven states against the textile strike; the Governor of Rhode Island called upon the Legislature to declare a "state of insurrection" and ask Roosevelt to send Federal troops; the State of Georgia erected concentration camps on the style of Nazi Germany, herding several thousand textile pickets into the camps. Some 18 or 20 workers were killed, hundreds wounded, tens of thousands gassed and arrested.

In spite of this extraordinary terror, the strike was growing stronger every day, extending to new mills, when suddenly it was called off by the leaders on the basis of a request from a Board appointed by Roosevelt, with loud claims of victory but without a single demand conceded by the employers.

It is undoubtedly necessary to characterize this wave of struggle as a revolutionary upsurge of the American working class. This upsurge defeated the efforts of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats and the government to bring the trade unions under governmental control and transform them into semi-official agencies of the N.R.A. It defeated the efforts of the leaders to drive the Communists out of the unions, and opened up a broad field for revolutionary work where before it had been impossible to penetrate. It gave the masses vivid and clear lessons in the practical benefits of class struggle, when the only considerable gains conceded to any group of workers in this period were those given to the longshoremen who had followed Communist leadership throughout their struggle and afterward, and who continued the fight by always new forms even after their strike was ended. As a result of these battles, there is a new relation of forces, a new social atmosphere, a new spirit among the masses, a new confidence and readiness to fight.

In characterizing the strike wave of 1934, it can be said that its most significant features are: first, that for the first time since 1919 have we witnessed such a great wave of struggle, developing on a continually rising level, directed against the effects of the Roosevelt New Deal policies; second, the masses have been aroused to an unparalleled fighting spirit and desire for unity in action, as expressed in the development of solidarity actions and movements for local general strikes, and the participation of the unorganized workers, the unemployed, and even the poor farmers; third, the mass urge of the unorganized workers for organization, and struggle against the company unions, which breaks through all the barriers which the trade union bureaucracy of the A. F. of L. attempt to put up.

The struggles for the most elementary economic demands develop into struggles of highly political character. Every effort of the

reformist leaders to prevent or sidetrack these struggles did not succeed, and they were forced to go along with the strike movement in order to avoid being swept aside and be in a better position to betray the struggle through arbitration. In this they were ably assisted by the Trotzkyites (Minneapolis), the Musteites (Toledo), and the Socialist leadership (textile).

This strike movement took place mainly through the channels of the reformist unions, and the Communists in the main were unable to exercise a decisive influence in the leadership of the workers because we were not entrenched as yet inside the A. F. of L. unions which the masses were entering for the purpose of carrying on struggles for their daily interests.

Nevertheless, the Communists played a growing and effective role, in some instances relatively weak as in Minneapolis (but even here of decisive importance at certain moments), in other cases of great influence though unorganized, as in the textile strike, and were able to issue timely slogans which were seized upon by the masses and translated into action (mass picketing, general strikes, solidarity actions).

Where the Communists were firmly established inside the A. F. of L. unions and had strong positions, as in the Pacific Coast Longshoremens's strike, we played a leading and decisive role from first to last, and were instrumental in forcing the calling of the San Francisco General Strike.

What is of supreme importance is this, that out of the strike wave the A. F. of L. bureaucracy emerged weaker, the S.P. emerged weaker, the Muste group and the renegades emerged weaker—but the Communist Party emerged stronger in every instance without exception.

V. THE CHANGE IN TRADE UNION POLICY

Serious changes in our current trade union policy were found to be necessary, in order to achieve these positive results in our work. In all the basic industries it was necessary to shift the main emphasis to work inside the A. F. of L. This we proceeded to do, at first with some hesitation, but, with our growing satisfactory experience, with increasing boldness. Among the longshoremens in San Francisco we threw all forces into the A. F. of L. union, with excellent results, not only establishing leadership of the most important strike, but winning victories for the workers, and maintaining our organizational positions after the strike; the big majority of all offices in the union in San Francisco were filled, in the September elections, by Communists and sympathizers.

In the textile industry, we joined the small and scattered locals of

the National Textile Workers Union into the United Textile Workers of the A. F. of L., thereby multiplying our organizational base by four or five times, and becoming an influential minority in the great strike movement of 400,000.

In the steel industry, we withdrew our Red union, the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union, and confined it to the field of light metal and machinery, sending all our steel workers into the A. F. of L. union, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, with the result that in a few weeks we have begun to crystallize a great national rank-and-file movement to prepare for strike in the spring, a movement which already has serious organizational strongholds in the union, basic American cadres of leaders, and excellent prospects for a great mass movement.

In the auto industry, we have dissolved the Red Auto Workers Union, sending the members into the A. F. of L. federal local unions, and already have under way a serious movement for the uniting of the 80 to 90 locals in the industry into an industrial union within the A. F. of L., a movement which forced the recent national convention of the A. F. of L. to grant industrial union form of organization to the auto industry, as well as to others.

Even in light industry, we had circumstances where it was necessary to send our forces into the A. F. of L., as in the case of the N.Y. dressmakers, and here again with the excellent results of considerably strengthening our influence over large masses of workers.

The resolution before us today proposes to confirm these changes in our trade union policy, and to set the Party even more firmly and energetically upon this path.

At the same time we do not propose a general and immediate abandonment of all independent revolutionary trade unions. While generally, in all industries, putting forward the line of trade union unity, we recognize that in some cases the cause of unification can be best advanced by strengthening the Red unions, or the independent unions not directly under our leadership.

There are still some seven national unions in the T.U.U.L., as well as a whole series of local unions, with a membership of about 75,000, for whom the perspective for the immediate future is continued independent existence; there are three or four unaffiliated national independent unions of which the same must be said.

That these unions have big possibilities of growth is demonstrated, for example, by the Metal Workers Union, about which news has just come that it has held a unity conference with 12 smaller independent unions, of about 10,000 members, which decided to organize a joint council for common action.

The independent United Shoe Workers Union (in which we

merged our Red shoe union a year ago) is much larger than the A. F. of L. union, and must talk unity with it in much different terms than in other places where we are relatively weak.

At our Eighth Party Convention, we put forward the perspective of the organization of an Independent Federation of Labor, which would unite the Red trade unions with the then growing independent unions, and with the expected movements of splitting away from the A. F. of L. of those newly-organized workers who rejected the plans of the A. F. of L. to split them up into craft unions. This was a realistic perspective, a possible development, at that time; but now we must say that this project has receded into the background for the next period.

When we are sending a number of our unions into the A. F. of L., when the independent unions are not growing as they did last year, and when the split movements from the A. F. of L. have been halted by the concessions granted at the last convention for industrial unions, it is clear that a new situation has arisen, in which immediate organizational steps for the Independent Federation of Labor would not serve to strengthen the movement. Whether this issue will again come to the foreground will depend upon future developments.

VI. FINDING NEW ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

In our latest resolution the concepts of "minority movement" and "opposition", as the organizational forms for our work in the A. F. of L., are sharply rejected, as tending to limit the movement to Communists and their close sympathizers; the task is set to find such forms which will lead to the Communists becoming the decisive trade union force, winning elective positions, becoming the responsible leaders of whole trade unions, and bringing the decisive masses behind them in their support. This position is fully confirmed by our experience in recent months.

Our most successful work has, in every case, found organizational forms which arise out of the established life and work of the individual union, in most instances having as its main center one of the union organs, either a local union in which we gain a majority, or a district council or other body of elected delegates.

We have rejected the proposal to attempt to transform into a general "opposition" center the A. F. of L. Rank-and-File Committee for Unemployment Insurance. This body has a specific role to perform, which would only be hindered and perhaps destroyed by trying to make it an all-embracing "minority movement". Its influence extends far beyond its active participants, as shown by the fact that it has won to the support of the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill more than 2,400 local unions and

seven national unions, with a very large part of the members of the A. F. of L. It furnishes a broad recruiting ground for the gathering of new forces into the revolutionary movements in the different industries and unions, which is a much more valuable function than to try itself to become the form for the revolutionary movement in the unions.

An increasingly important role will now be played by revolutionary delegates in trade union conventions and conferences and councils. Even in the A. F. of L. National Convention, which is very tightly controlled by the top bureaucracy, it is possible to develop effective "revolutionary parliamentarism". These possibilities we are now beginning to use; thus, while in 1932, there was not a single revolutionary delegate to the A. F. of L. Convention, and in 1933, there was only one, in 1934 we had 15 delegates standing on our revolutionary program and fighting for its adoption in the Convention, putting forward our various measures before the whole working class through the participation in the Convention.

VII. SOME UNITED FRONT SUCCESSES

An outstanding feature of our united front efforts was the Second U.S. Congress Against War and Fascism, held in Chicago at the end of September. At this Congress were 3,332 delegates, from organizations with a total membership of 1,600,000. That represents an extension of the influence of our movement over about a million organized persons *more* than we have ever before had gathered around us. The quality of this representation was higher than ever before; it came after a year of the most intense attacks against the American League Against War and Fascism by the A. F. of L. and the S.P., who denounced the League and its Congress as a "Communist innocents' club".

In spite of these attacks, the Congress represented considerable expansion in both the A. F. of L. and the S.P. For example, among the 350 trade union delegates was an important delegation of A. F. of L. union leaders, all workers from the mills but influential officials of the union, representing a district which a few weeks later in its convention voted to confirm its affiliation to the League. Further, there were 49 S.P. members present, headed by Mrs. Victor Berger, widow of the former Socialist Congressman, who formed themselves into a national committee to fight for the united front of the S.P. with the C.P.; since the Congress this Committee has gained notable victories. For instance, the Milwaukee S.P. organization, which had threatened to expel Mrs. Victor Berger for attending the Congress, and which actually did expel a member, Compere, has in the past days been forced to reverse itself and officially

join the League, after participating in a united street demonstration and march, headed by the expelled Compere, together with the secretaries of the local S.P. and C.P., and addressed by Mrs. Berger, among others.

The League Against War and Fascism also made significant advances among women's organizations, in connection with the campaign to send a delegation to the Paris Anti-War Congress of Women. Having set itself the task of getting 15 delegates to Paris, it surprised everyone by obtaining twice that number in a short campaign of 60 days, including that most difficult of all tasks, the raising of sufficient money to cover the heavy expenses of such a long trip for a large delegation.

An autonomous Youth Section of the League held a separate Youth Congress in connection with the main gathering in Chicago, with over 700 delegates. In this Youth Section are included all organizations of youth in the U.S. who in any way consider themselves "to the Left" of Roosevelt.

A unique achievement of the youth united front movement was the building of an anti-fascist bloc inside the American Youth Congress, which was called together by a certain young woman named Viola Ilma with the backing of Mrs. Roosevelt, Anne Morgan, a half-dozen State Governors, members of the Roosevelt Cabinet, etc., with the purpose of adopting a program for American youth which was distinctly fascist in its tendencies.

To this Congress came delegates of all varieties of youth organizations, including Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, church youth organizations, trade unions, student organizations, the Socialist youth, the Y.C.L., etc., representing a membership of 1,700,000. The anti-fascist bloc in this Congress took control of it at its opening, adopted an anti-fascist program which included the immediate demands of the working youth, consolidated the overwhelming majority of the delegates behind this program, set up a continuation committee to which almost all the participating organizations continued to adhere after the Congress, conducted a series of conferences and meetings over the whole country, captured away from Ilma various state conferences which she tried to organize afterwards, and gathered another Youth Congress in Washington in January, to present the youth demands to Congress and to President Roosevelt.

Our united front approaches to the Socialist Party have been involved in the divisions within that Party which came into the open in the fight for and against the Detroit Convention declaration of principles. Two distinct camps have crystallized, which already have many of the characteristics of two separate parties (separate na-

tional committees, headquarters, funds, etc.), and which conduct negotiations with one another like two parties.

The so-called "Left", headed by Norman Thomas, is very heterogeneous, and really is a bloc of several distinct groups. The Right Wing is very militant, while the "Left" with Thomas, the Centrist, at its head, is very conciliatory, although it controls the Party. In the Detroit Convention the Right Wing wrote the trade union resolution which was adopted with the vote of the "Left" majority. The Right Wing still dictates or decisively influences many of the current decisions of policy of the National Committee, of which Thomas nominally has a big majority. Thus on the issue of the united front with the C.P., Thomas swings back and forth with the wind of the moment, following no consistent line.

Shortly after Thomas had made a public speech hailing the French united front, and expressing the belief that it could be duplicated in the U.S.A., he participated in the action to reject the united front by the S.P. National Committee. This action was itself a classical study in hesitation and equivocation. On a Saturday the Committee debated the question, coming to a decision *favorable* to opening negotiations with the C.P., by a vote of 7 to 4. A few hours after the meeting closed for the day, a capitalist newspaper appeared on the streets with big headlines announcing "S.P. Decides to Join the Reds". Some of those who had voted for the united front went into a panic at the sight of this capitalist newspaper publicity on their action, and without a full or formal meeting of their committee, decided to reverse their vote, hastily wrote a statement to this effect and gave it to the newspapers, which came out with the news of the *unfavorable* vote two hours after they had announced the *favorable* vote.

The conflict was smoothed over later by a compromise decision, that the question of united front was only *postponed* until December, to obtain the advice of the Second International, to see the further development in France, and to have the results of the Seventh Congress of the C.I. (at that time expected in September); and further, to send a delegation of "observers" to the Chicago Anti-War Congress to report back with recommendations as to whether the S.P. should affiliate or not.

All the conciliation and waverings of Thomas, however, and all his concessions to the Right Wing, have not served to bridge over the split, but seem, on the contrary, only to drive it deeper, to make the struggle develop more sharply. This is because in the lower organizations the controversy is raging, with the adherents of the united front becoming ever stronger, more organized, more clear and effective in their demands. In this the "committee for

the united front", formed at the Chicago Congress, has been a decisive influence. The Revolutionary Policy Committee, while containing many energetic advocates of the united front, has been singularly passive and irresolute as an organized group. It is too heterogeneous in composition to become a forceful leading center in the inner-Party struggle.

Present indications are that the National Committee of the S.P. will try to obtain a temporary settlement of the conflicts on the united front by a decision to enter into the American League Against War and Fascism, with a series of conditions, such as the addition of a list of leading S.P. members to its leading committees, certain limitations upon criticism by the C.P. against the S.P. leaders and policies, etc. Our policy is to facilitate so far as possible, without concession in principle, the entry of the S.P. into the League; but at the same time to use this to raise even more sharply than before the question of direct negotiations between the two parties for a general united front on all the most burning questions of the class struggle, including the fight for the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, the Negro Rights Bill, Farmers' Relief, and the current strike movements.

VIII. THE QUESTION OF A LABOR PARTY

The political changes taking place among the American masses already require that the Communist Party shall again review the question of the possible formation of a Labor Party, and its attitude toward such a party if it should crystallize on a mass scale. The correct basic approach to this question was formulated at the Sixth World Congress in 1928, which said:

"On the question of organizing a Labor Party, the Congress resolves: that the Party concentrate on the work in the trade unions, on organizing the unorganized, etc., and in this way lay the basis for the practical realization of the slogan of a broad Labor Party, organized from below."

Since 1929 until now, this correct orientation has necessitated unqualified opposition by the Communist Party to the current proposals to organize a Labor Party which, in this period, could only have been an appendage of the existing bourgeois parties.

Developments in 1934, however, begin to place this question in a new setting, in a new relation of forces.

The decisive new features are, in brief:

1. Mass disillusionment with the New Deal and Roosevelt administration, shown by the development of the strike wave *against* the codes, and *against* the Government conciliation and arbitration boards,

also shown negatively in the fall of the Democratic Party vote from 22,000,000 in 1932 to 15,000,000 in 1934.

2. The bankruptcy of the Republican Party policy, which attempted to utilize this disillusionment and turn it into openly reactionary channels, according to the traditional two-party system, but without success.

3. The mass support given in the election to groupings and leaders within the old parties and to new and minor parties standing (in the eyes of the masses) to the Left of Roosevelt (Sinclair in California; LaFollette and the new Progressive Party which captured the State of Wisconsin; Olson and the Farmer-Labor Party who won Minnesota with an unexpectedly large vote; Huey Long faction of the Democratic Party in Louisiana, with its two-year moratorium on debts, etc.; and a number of less significant examples all over the country).

4. Renewed mass interest in the trade unions in all forms of proposals that the workers' organizations engage directly in political struggle against the capitalists and their parties, whether through a Labor Party, through workers' tickets, or in other forms.

It is clear that mass disintegration of the traditional party system has begun; masses are beginning to break away from the Democratic and Republican Parties. There are all probabilities that the discontented, disillusioned masses will already be moving during the next two years sufficiently to give birth to a new mass party, to the Left of and in opposition to the existing major political alignments.

As to the character of such a new mass party, the major possible variants are the following: (a) A "Peoples" or "Progressive" Party, based on the LaFollette, Sinclair, Olson, Long movements, and typified by these leaders and their program; (b) A "Farmer-Labor" or "Labor" Party, with the same character, differing only in name and extent of demagogy; (c) A Labor Party with a predominantly trade union base, with a program of immediate demands only (possibly with vague demagogy about a "cooperative commonwealth" a la Olsen), dominated by a section of the trade union bureaucracy assisted by the Socialist Party and excluding the Communists; (d) A Labor Party built up from below, on a trade union basis but in conflict with the bureaucracy, with a program of demands closely associated with mass struggles, strikes, etc., with a decisive role in the leadership played by militant elements, including the Communists.

The major task of the Communist Party is to build and strengthen its own direct influence and membership, on the basis of the immediate issues of the class struggle connected with its revolutionary program for a way out of the crisis. It cannot expect, how-

ever, that it will be able to bring directly under its own banner, and immediately, the million masses who will be breaking away from the old parties.

At the same time, it cannot remain indifferent or passive towards the development of these millions, nor the organized form which their political activities will take. It must energetically intervene in this process, influence the development towards assuming the form of a real Labor Party based upon the working masses, their struggles and needs, ally itself with all elements willing to work loyally towards a similar aim, and declare its readiness to enter such a mass Labor Party when the necessary preconditions have been created.

At the same time, it must conduct a systematic struggle against all attempts to capture this mass movement within the confines of a "Peoples" or "Progressive" Party, or within a Party of the same character masquerading as a "Labor" Party. This will at the same time be the most effective basis for struggle against a Labor Party bureaucratically controlled from above by Right Wing reformists with the exclusion of the Communists and rank-and-file militants.

In this situation the simple slogan "For a Labor Party" is not an effective banner under which to rally the class forces of the workers. This will be also the main slogan of a section of the reformist bureaucrats, who will transform its contents into that of a mild liberal opposition; its undifferentiated use by the Communists would therefore play into their hands. Every effort must be made, therefore, to bring a clear differentiation into two camps of those who are trying to turn the mass movement into two different channels, on the one hand of mild liberal opposition masking class collaboration and a subordination of the workers' demands to the interests of capital, of profits and private property, and on the other hand of an essentially revolutionary mass struggle for immediate demands which boldly goes beyond the limits of the interests of capital. In this struggle for differentiation, care must be taken to avoid all sectarian narrowness, which would only play into the hands of the reformists; that means, first of all, that the basis of unity of the working class camp must be the immediate demands with the broadest mass appeal. At the same time the Communist Party energetically conducts its own independent political mass work for the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

All premature organizational moves should be carefully avoided. The Communist Party should not itself and alone initiate the formation of a new Party. In the various states this problem will present itself with all variations of the possible relation of forces. It will be necessary to study carefully the situation in each state, and the tempo of development, adjusting our practical attitude and tactics

in accordance with these differences. There is much greater possibility of the final crystallization of a mass Labor Party in certain states, in the immediate future, than upon a national scale where the contradictions and complications are more intense.

It is necessary to strengthen systematically all mass connections of the Party, and the Party itself, politically and organizationally, preparing to face and to solve without undue hesitation the various practical phases of this question that will present themselves in life, and which will be especially subtle and intricate in the earlier stages of development. The basic means to this end is the bold and energetic expansion of our united front work in all fields, but before all in the trade unions, especially in the A. F. of L.

Every phase of the struggle for the political leadership of the masses now breaking away from the Democratic and Republican Parties is dependent upon the constant growth and strengthening of the Communist Party as an independent revolutionary force, with its full program made familiar to ever broader masses. It depends upon, and must always be subordinated to, the daily mass struggles of the workers, before all, of strikes and other economic struggles, the struggles of the unemployed, of the farmers, the movement for Unemployment Insurance, etc.

Under the conditions of the crisis, in its present phase of protracted depression, with sharpening and broadening mass struggles, of growing difficulties of the bourgeoisie, the only forces capable of leading a mass struggle really to win the immediate demands of the toiling masses of the United States, is the revolutionary vanguard of the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party.

clothing and furnishings in September, 1933, but only 79½ cents worth in September, 1934.

General living costs rose more than 5 per cent in the first six months of the New Deal. Between March, 1933, and November, 1934, general living costs went up by 12.5 per cent, according to the National Industrial Conference Board.

Prices will be forced up still further during the coming months, according to statements by President Roosevelt and Secretary of Agriculture Wallace. In August, 1934, Secretary Wallace declared that general living costs would be up 6 or 7 per cent more during the coming winter, and one of his assistants admitted at the same time that, taken separately, food prices were expected to rise from 15 to 20 per cent as a result of the drought (*New York Times*, August 15, 1934). Bread and certain other essential articles of food in certain cities have already risen from 20 to 50 per cent in the past six months.

President Roosevelt, on October 31, 1934, repeated his intention to lift prices in the following months and thus to force down still further the living standards of the workers:

“As President Roosevelt revealed his determination today to lift prices in the next eight months, he said that at the same time there would be an increase in values. . . . The move represents a continuation of the long pull toward levels at which the President would be willing to stabilize. . . . Much of the development of the administration’s monetary policy has been, and is, dependent upon the progress toward bringing prices into line.” (*New York Times*, November 1, 1934.)

By “bringing prices into line” is meant the drive to force up prices of food products which the great mass of workers must buy. Wages, meanwhile, lag behind the rising cost of living, and thus the main burden of recovery is laid upon the workers and other low-income groups.

REAL WAGES FALL

The transition to a depression has not put a stop to the fall of workers’ *real wages*. While a certain increase has taken place in nominal wages—and especially in *wage rates*—due to the struggles and threat of strikes on the part of the workers themselves, this increase does not keep pace with the rise in living costs.

The new lowered standard of living is shown clearly in the fact that the individual worker’s buying power has *declined* in the period of the New Deal. In terms of bread, meat, light, fuel and clothing, the necessaries of life, the average worker cannot buy even

so much as he could buy in March, 1933, at the lowest level of the economic crisis. This fact is openly stated by the American Federation of Labor in its *Monthly Survey of Business* for November, 1934, on the basis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

“Thus far, however, the rapid increase in prices has cancelled all gains in the average worker’s income. . . . *Workers’ average weekly income in 104 industries* (including 90 manufacturing industries, mining and other groups) *employing nearly two-thirds of all industrial workers was \$19.65 in March, 1933; \$19.05 in September, 1914, when the rise in living costs is accounted for.*” (Our emphasis.)

From these figures we see that *real wages*, representing the worker’s buying power, have actually fallen by a little over 3 per cent since the low point of March, 1933. While capitalists’ profits have increased, workers’ real wages have *decreased*. The Roosevelt New Deal has enriched the owners at the direct expense of the workers.

While the N.R.A. codes established a minimum wage of \$12 or \$13 a week, below which rates were not supposed to fall, many exceptions, exemptions and violations have reduced actual wages below the minimum set. No code contained any guarantee whatsoever of any minimum *earnings* either weekly or yearly. Earnings are frequently far below even the low \$12 level. In Pennsylvania, for example, in the early spring of 1934, it was found that one-half of the women workers in the cotton garment industry were earning less than \$10.95 a week, and 15 per cent of the women earned less than \$5. Barely a third of the women workers had received as much as \$13 a week, the minimum wage fixed by the code, although the code had been in effect for four months.

Since the code minimum has tended to become the maximum, many skilled workers have seen their wages cut by the N.R.A. and their standards of living further lowered. The present drive to lower the wages of building trades workers in connection with a federal housing scheme is an indication of what skilled workers may expect in the further extension of the recovery program.

TERROR INCREASES

But when workers under the New Deal have struck for higher wages, or for any other demands, employers have had at their disposal the entire apparatus of State violence to use in breaking the strike. In no other period of American labor history has there been such a record of terror against the workers as during the first nine months of 1934.

Between January 1 and September 22, 1934, 46 *workers*—10 of them Negroes—*were killed in strikes or struggles*. In the general textile strike alone, during September, 1934, 13 workers were murdered in four states; nine workers were killed in the general marine strike; and eight workers in miners' strikes, mostly in Alabama.

National Guardsmen were called out to suppress 22 workers' struggles in 19 states between July, 1933, and mid-September, 1934. They were responsible for killing at least nine of the strikers. Police, deputy sheriffs and gun thugs, hired by employers, murdered the other workers.

This increasing terror is the outward sign of a developing fascism in the United States. The menace of fascism is increasing, as the capitalists resort to methods of barbarism to maintain their rule. Only the united front of the entire working class can halt the growth of fascism in this richest of capitalist countries.

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