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**REPORTS TO THE**

**9<sup>TH</sup> CONVENTION**

**OF THE**

**COMMUNIST PARTY**

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# REPORT

OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO THE  
NINTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE U.S.A.

Delivered by

**EARL BROWDER**

*General Secretary of the Communist Party*

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## INTRODUCTION

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**C**OMRADES, the Ninth National Convention of the Communist Party of the United States meets in a situation of deepening crisis of the capitalist world, and at the opening of the most fateful election struggle that our country has witnessed since the Civil War.

At our Central Committee meeting in November, 1935, we adopted a policy based upon the analysis and conclusions of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, in which our Party had actively participated in shaping. Experience has furnished us with full proof of the correctness of that policy. Applying it energetically, our Party has emerged upon the political scene as one of the basic factors, as a political force, rallying and uniting all the most advanced elements of the working class against the forces of reaction, gathering the still scattered parts of the coming people's front in America.

In this Convention it is not necessary again to review the basic discussions that were held around the Seventh World Congress. They are already so fully interwoven into our daily life, in thought and action, so fully proved by experience to be correct, that we can take their conclusions as our starting point, to plunge immediately into the central concrete problems of the day, the answers to which determine our attitude toward all minor and secondary questions.

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ONE

STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM  
AND TO MAINTAIN PEACE

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**T**HE world is torn between two main directions of development; on the one hand stand those forces striving to maintain the rights and living standards of the masses in the midst of capitalist crisis and decay, and to maintain world peace; on the other side are the forces of fascism, striving to wipe out popular rights and throw the full burden of the crisis onto the masses, driving toward a new world war.

The camp of fascism, of the war-makers, is mighty and menacing. It is headed by Hitler fascism, the most bloody and bestial reaction the world has ever seen. It contains Mussolini, whose hands drip with the blood of Italians and Ethiopians alike. It includes the military-fascist government of Japan, which is carving a new empire out of the body of the Chinese people. In every capitalist country its forces are organizing, backed and

inspired by the monopolists of finance capital, and, where not already in power, are preparing with all energy, ruthlessness, and demagogy, to seize control of government. In the United States, this camp is headed by the dominant leadership of the Republican Party, with its allies of the Liberty League, Hearst, Black Legion, Ku Klux Klan, Coughlin, and others.

The camp of progress and peace finds its stronghold in the Soviet Union, the country of socialist prosperity. To its banner are rallying all the growing armies of those who would resist fascism and war. Relying upon its mighty strength, the French people were able to gather in the great *Front Populaire*, which threw back the first assaults of French fascism and warded off the first threat of war by Hitler, advancing the living standards of the masses and their organized strength. Seeing in it a powerful protector, the small nations of Europe whose existence is threatened, who find less and less assistance from the great capitalist powers, turn to the firm peace policy of the Soviet Union as their reliable refuge. Even those great countries ruled by the imperialist bourgeoisie, like the U.S.A., who for their own special reasons are not ready for war, who want to maintain the *status quo*, at least for a time, must turn, even though hesitatingly, toward collaboration with the Soviet Union. The oppressed nations look to it for inspiration and leadership. Within each capitalist country, all forces for peace, and especially the workers and farmers, are beginning to see in the policy of the Soviet Union the chief hope of peace and progress in the world.

### *The Fascists and War-Makers Can Be Defeated*

There are voices which shout of the menace of fascism and war, even in radical and "revolutionary" phrases, but which cannot find anything to say about the mighty and growing forces for progress and peace. Such voices come from confusionists and panic-mongers, who consciously or unconsciously are the advance agents of fascism, spreading defeatism and demoralization among the masses, disarming them before the enemy.

It is possible to defeat the fascists and war-makers. It is possible to move toward progress, to maintain peace. But to do this requires that we recognize and make full use of all factors, even

the smallest, that work toward this end, even temporarily. It requires a drive toward *one united international policy*, around which is rallied the growing armies of progress and peace. It requires the recognition of the role of the Soviet Union, and full utilization of this great power.

The confusionists and panic-mongers all have one common starting point for their defeatism, fatalism, and hopelessness. They reject the Soviet Union as a great power for progress and peace; some of them, like the Trotskyists, are moved by definitely counter-revolutionary theories and hatreds; others, like Norman Thomas, because they are filled with doubts, reservations, hesitations, unclarity. Wherever this influence, in whatever degree, prevails among the masses, there we have more division instead of more unity, more confusion instead of more clarity, more defeatism and demoralization instead of the growth of a militant united movement against fascism and war.

But the united people's front is winning the masses more and more in every country. It is overcoming the demagogic slanders of the counter-revolutionists, it is dissolving the doubts and hesitations of the confused people. It must, it can, and it will win the majority of the toiling people of every country.

We will have a special report to this Convention on the detailed problems of the fight to maintain world peace, and the role of the Soviet Union and its peace policy. My report will therefore not go into the details of this subject. I must, however, before I pass on to the problems of the struggle against reaction in the United States, say just a few words about the latest historic achievements of socialism in the Soviet Union, which have made possible its rapidly enlarged role in world affairs.

### *The New Soviet Constitution*

The new Soviet Constitution, published in the last days, gives us some measure of the greatness of these achievements. For the first time in human history, a government can write into its basic law the guarantee to every citizen of education, work, and leisure. That is the outstanding feature of the new Constitution, which is unique, which has no counterpart or forerunner. That is the fruit of socialism, of the rule of the working class,



of the First and Second Five-Year Plans for socialist industrialization, of the collectivization of agriculture, of the great Stakhanov movement for increase of socialist productivity. That is the fruit of the genius of Lenin and Stalin.

It is upon this solid foundation of working class rule and socialism that it was possible to erect the superstructure of the most complete democracy ever seen. Complete adult suffrage, beginning at the age of 18; equality of representation for all voters; guarantee of the right of self-determination of the constituent nationalities; direct election to all offices, including judiciary, by secret ballot; full guarantee of individual rights, including the rights of personal property resulting from individual labor; free speech, press, and assemblage made concrete by providing the masses with printing presses, halls, and possession of the streets; and freedom of worship—here, indeed, is a democracy which already, only 19 years since the revolution in a most backward country, surpasses the dreams of the great Utopians.

This is why the Soviet Union can come forward as the organizer of all the forces of progress and peace everywhere in the world.

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TWO

THE FASCIST MENACE IN THE U.S.A.,  
ISSUES AND PARTIES IN THE 1936 ELECTIONS

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**T**HERE are two chief and opposite directions of possible development in American political life in the 1936 elections. All parties and groups must be judged by their relation to these two fundamental political tendencies. One stems from the most reactionary circles of finance capital, Wall Street; its direction is toward fascism and war. The fundamental aims of this camp can be summarized in five points:

1. Restore capitalist profits by cutting wages, raising prices, checking the growth of trade unions, subverting them, and eventually wiping them out; squeeze out the poor farmers from agriculture, transforming them into propertyless workers.

2. Wipe out social and labor legislation, balance the budget by eliminating unemployment relief, cutting the taxes of the rich and throwing the tax burden onto the poor by means of sales taxes.

3. Remove all remnants of popular influence upon the government, by vesting all final power in the hands of an irresponsible judiciary—the Supreme Court; drive toward the curtailment and eventual destruction of democratic liberties and civil rights; create the storm troops of reaction, Black Legions, Ku Klux Klans, etc.

4. Seize control of all governmental machinery, moving toward a full-fledged fascist regime, in “American” and “constitutional” ways.

5. Develop extreme jingoistic nationalist moods among the masses; drive toward war under cover of “American isolation” and “neutrality”; support to and alliance with Hitler and other fascists, preparing the new world war.

The other chief direction of possible development, insofar as it becomes effective, moves and must move toward an opposite set of fundamental aims, which can be stated as follows:

1. Restore and raise the living standards of the masses, by higher wages, shorter hours, lower prices, extending the trade unions to the basic industries and all workers, through militant industrial unionism; secure the farmers in possession of their farms, with governmental help and guarantee of a minimum standard of life.

2. Consolidate and extend social and labor legislation, with guarantee of a minimum standard of life for all, financing this with sharply graduated taxes on incomes, property, and accumulated surpluses, abolition of sales taxes, balancing the budget at the expense of the rich.

3. Curb the usurped power of the Supreme Court; maintain and extend democratic rights and civil liberties; dispersal of reactionary bands, abolition of the use of legal machinery to suppress the people’s movements; extension of popular control over government.

4. Restore control of the government to representatives of the people’s organizations, through a broad people’s front.

5. Unite with the peace forces of the whole world to restrain the war-makers, to keep America out of war by keeping war out of the world.

How do the various parties and groups stand in relation to these two opposite and fundamental sets of objectives?

The Republican Party, headed by Landon and Knox, is unquestionably representing the full reactionary program. William Randolph Hearst has formulated that program with greatest clarity, has pursued it with the most vicious and obstinate energy. Hearst named the Republican ticket already in August, 1935. Morgan, the du Ponts, Mellon, all the most reactionary circles of Wall Street, are fully behind Landon and Knox. The platform of the Republican Party, behind a thin smoke-screen of tepid liberalism, contains all the essentials of Hearst's program, including its demagoguery.

The Communist Party declares without qualification that the Landon-Hearst-Wall Street ticket is the chief enemy of the liberties, peace, and prosperity of the American people. Its victory would carry our country a long way on the road to fascism and war.

Roosevelt and his administration are trying to pursue a middle course between these two opposite fundamental directions of policy. On the one hand, they try to keep mass support by certain small concessions to the needs and demands of the people. On the other hand, they answer the pressure and attacks of the reactionary forces by greater concessions in that direction. Especially in the last year, Roosevelt's course has been a series of retreats before the offensive of reaction. His administration is allowing itself to be dragged more and more onto the path of Hearst.

The Communist Party declares that it is a fatal mistake to depend upon Roosevelt to check the attacks of Wall Street, or to advance the fundamental interests and demands of the masses of the people.

Where, then, can the people turn to find a protection against the reactionary forces that assail them?

### *The Farmer-Labor Party Is the People's Front*

With full knowledge that the great majority are not yet prepared to turn to socialism, as represented either by the Socialist Party or the Communist Party, we Communists come forward

with an immediate program which the masses are ready to support, to point out the path along which the people can maintain and advance their fundamental interests and rights. That immediate program arises out of the five fundamental aims of the masses of the people, which I outlined as the opposite of the reactionary program, which is the program of a people's front, a program for democratic rights, for prosperity and peace.

This is not a program of revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. It can be realized within the framework of the present economic system by a people's government backed by the organized masses, determined to fight to keep Wall Street and its fascism out of power.

This program is essentially covered by the platform adopted by the Farmer-Labor Party National Conference, held in Chicago on May 30-31, on the call of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and Governor Floyd Olson. Our Central Committee gave its full support to that Conference, its decisions and platform. That action should have the unanimous endorsement of this Convention. The Chicago Conference laid the foundations for a National Farmer-Labor Party in 1936, the foundations for the people's front which can halt the forces of fascism and war in America.

The Farmer-Labor Party in 1936 will concentrate on state and Congressional elections, in an effort to send a bloc of real people's Congressmen to Washington, to fight for the fundamental program of progress.

It had long been the hope of our Party that we would be able to go into the Presidential elections this year with a Farmer-Labor national ticket. Already in May it had become clear that this was impossible. The great majority of organizations composing the Farmer-Labor movement, while breaking with the old parties, had decided to follow the policy of the big progressive unions of the Committee for Industrial Organization, in supporting Roosevelt for re-election.

The Communist Party declared that it seriously disagreed with this policy of dependence upon Roosevelt. We did not, however, withdraw from full participation in this rapidly growing movement for the Farmer-Labor Party. We are fully prepared to continue and develop our united front relations with those who

support Roosevelt, reserving our disagreement on this question. Our united front with these organizations and groups has the solid foundation of complete agreement with them that the Republican Party, with its Hearst-Liberty League allies, is the main enemy that must be defeated at all costs.

The Farmer-Labor Party movement is a rapidly growing national political force. The Chicago Conference was thoroughly representative of it, with the exception of the Wisconsin movement, and some national trade unions which refrained from participation because of their tie-up with the new Labor's Non-Partisan League for support of Roosevelt. Even in this latter case, however, the Chicago Conference showed its influence and vitality by the friendly connections with the progressive trade unions exhibited in the greetings and good wishes sent the Conference by John L. Lewis, Sidney Hillman, and David Dubinsky. There is every reason to expect the Farmer-Labor Party to emerge in the 1936 elections as a major influence in American political life.

If we can record with pleasure the increasingly progressive role being played by the trade unions of the Committee for Industrial Organization, in political life as well as in trade union questions, the case is the opposite with the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, representing the craft union forces, and led by Green, Woll, and Hutcheson. These gentlemen are following the logic of their reactionary opposition to industrial unionism, and move to the Right also in politics. One of the most shameful pages in American labor history was the appearance of William Green at the Republican Convention to urge inclusion in the platform of such openly reactionary planks that even the Republican Party, which will surely follow that line, considered it bad politics to openly admit it now before the elections. Green's advocacy of deportations, of breaking relations with the Soviet Union, his opposition to curbing the power of the Supreme Court and to minimum wage laws, constituted an acceptance of the most reactionary course in American political life.

In view of the absence of a Farmer-Labor Presidential ticket this year, an additional importance is assumed by the question of developing our united front relations with the Socialist Party.

Our fundamental conception of the Farmer-Labor Party is that it will include also the Socialist and Communist Parties. Wherever it is developing on a mass scale, it does include both parties in one form or another. Where the Socialist Party has stood aside and resisted its growth, they have been isolated and reduced to the smallest of sects. In spite of these lessons, the Socialist Party is still confused in its attitude toward the Farmer-Labor Party. The resolution on this question adopted at its convention was a half-hearted compromise, and even against this a substantial minority voted on grounds of opposition in principle. This opposition to the broad political united front against reaction is a dangerous feature of Socialist Party development, threatening to shunt it onto a sectarian sidetrack.

The Socialist Party convention registered some advances. It defeated the worst section of the Old Guard, which has now split away. This was a defeat of Hearstism, of anti-Sovietism, of resistance in principle to the united front. That means progress, movement to the Left, towards a working class policy. It tends to improve our relations with the Socialist Party. The convention, while approving a united front with the Communists on separate and isolated questions, rejected, however, any move toward a more systematic development of united action on the most important questions of the day. At the same time it took a most reactionary step in accepting organic unity with the counter-revolutionary Trotskyites.

We must warn our Socialist comrades: Be careful, you are about to swallow a deadly poison, which we know from sad experience. Better prepare an emetic, for surely you will soon be in convulsions from severe internal political disturbances. We hope you will recover from the illness which you are guaranteeing for yourselves.

We proposed to the Socialist Party, since the broader unity of a Farmer-Labor Presidential ticket was no longer possible, that our two parties should try to attain the next most desirable unity in the elections, with a joint Presidential ticket. Our Socialist friends, however, rejected our proposal without even a discussion. Their sharp internal struggles, and the deep differences of opinion in their ranks, make it difficult for them to

face and discuss any policy except rigid adherence to established formulae, while drifting with the winds of political circumstance.

From all this it is clear that it is not our choice if this Ninth Convention of the Communist Party has no other conclusion to make, in the Presidential elections, except to place in the field its own independent ticket for President and Vice-President.

We would gladly sacrifice the advantages of our own independent ticket, in favor of the ticket selected by a broad people's front against reaction, fascism, and war. We were prepared to sacrifice it even for the narrower gain of a united front with the Socialist Party. Our own independent ticket is not a matter of rigid principle with us; we can maintain and advance our views even more effectively, under the conditions now prevailing in America, in face of the threat of rampant reaction and war, within the broader unity of a working class and people's front.

That means that our independent ticket will be placed in the service of creating that broader unity, the people's front. It will promote the Farmer-Labor Party in every way possible. It will base itself upon the growing mass movement in the states and Congressional districts for Farmer-Labor tickets. Our campaign will be primarily on behalf of the program of the people's front. At the same time we will carry on a mass campaign of education, on a scale never before attained, to teach the broad millions the meaning of socialism, of the working class revolution, of the full Communist program which is the only final solution of the problems created for the population by a dying capitalist system.

### *Differentiating Between Landon and Roosevelt*

We must frankly face and answer the question as to why, if the Landon-Knox ticket is the chief enemy, we do not come out in support of Roosevelt as the practical alternative this year. When Major Berry of Labor's Non-Partisan League was asked by the newspaper reporters if he was inviting the Communists to go along in their support of Roosevelt, he answered: "Let their conscience be their guide." Well, we have consulted both our conscience and our understanding; both join in counseling



rejection of any reliance upon Roosevelt to defeat the reactionaries. Let us be very clear on this question. Our answer is not dictated by dogmatic rejection in principle of the idea of supporting a bourgeois candidate under any and all conditions. Lenin long ago taught us that such doctrinaire policies are not revolutionary. He taught us when, how, under what conditions, Communists could not only vote for but even enter into alliances with bourgeois candidates and parties—as against a threatening attack of overwhelming reactionary forces.

Let me give you a quotation from Lenin, written in the early years of the century, which contains one of the best clear formulations of our guiding principle on this question. Lenin said:

“Can a class-conscious worker ignore the democratic struggle for the sake of the socialist struggle, or ignore the latter for the sake of the former? No, a class-conscious worker calls himself a Social-Democrat [that was when the Communist Party was called Social-Democratic Labor Party—E.B.] precisely because he understands the inter-relation between the two struggles. He knows that there is no other road to socialism but the road through democracy, through political liberty. He therefore strives for the complete and consistent achievement of democracy for the sake of attaining the ultimate goal—socialism. Why are not the conditions for the democratic struggle the same as the conditions for the socialist struggle? Because the workers will necessarily have different allies in those two struggles. The workers wage the democratic struggle together with a section of the bourgeoisie, especially the petty bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the workers wage the socialist struggle against the whole of the bourgeoisie.” (*Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 153.)

Applying these principles to the United States in 1936, we reach certain conclusions on which our policy is based. We will review some of these conclusions in detail.

First, workers are interested, it is not a matter of indifference to them, as to which of two bourgeois parties shall hold power, when one of them is reactionary, desires to wipe out democratic rights and social legislation, while the other in some degree defends these progressive measures achieved under capitalism. Thus, we clearly and sharply differentiate between Landon and Roosevelt, declare that Landon is the chief enemy, direct our main fire against him, do everything possible to shift masses away from voting for him even though we cannot win their votes for the

Communist Party, even though the result is that they vote for Roosevelt. This is not an example of the policy of the "lesser evil", which led the German workers to disaster; we specifically and constantly warn against any reliance upon Roosevelt, we criticize his surrenders to reaction and the many points in which he fully agrees with reaction; we accept no responsibility for Roosevelt.

Second, while we are not indifferent to the practical result of the election, we cannot support Roosevelt even as a means of defending democratic rights and social legislation which are seriously threatened, because Roosevelt himself is either unwilling or unable to conduct a serious struggle to this end. He is retreating before the attacks of reaction within his own party, as well as from the Republicans. He is bound within the limits of the reactionary Southern landlord interests, which control the Solid South, base of the Democratic Party. He yields most to reaction when he has the most support from the Left; he fights reaction only to the degree that he thinks necessary to hold labor and progressive forces from breaking away. Therefore, even from the narrow viewpoint of using Roosevelt against Landon, it is absolutely necessary to build the independent organization of labor and progressive forces for independent action—the Farmer-Labor Party; to support Roosevelt is to invite him to make even further retreats.

Third, in order to have an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie against the reactionaries, to preserve democratic rights, it is necessary for the workers and their more permanent allies (farmers and impoverished city middle classes) to have their own independent party, which at the same time prepares and conducts the struggle toward socialism. The two sides of the struggle must be developed together, or both are lost in a swamp of opportunist confusion or a desert of sectarianism.

That is why we do not support Roosevelt, although we direct the main fire against Landon. We have nothing in common with the approach to this question of the Socialists, of Norman Thomas. Our friend Thomas sees the world through peculiar spectacles; he cannot see the fascist direction of the Republican Party, but rather accepts at its face value the crudely-staged

“liberalization” of its Cleveland Convention. He thus renders unwilling but nonetheless effective aid to Hearst’s demagogy. At the same time he proclaims the main issue of this election is socialism, and says of Roosevelt that he is probably the best thing possible under capitalism, that “if you want reforms, better stick to Roosevelt”. From these premises he concludes it is a matter of indifference to the workers as to what kind of regime results from the election. We must describe such confusion as nothing but opportunist sectarianism.

*Democracy or Fascism—The Issue in the 1936 Elections*

Fourth, we must clarify the question, is socialism the issue that will be decided in this election? The war-cry of the reactionaries is that Roosevelt’s New Deal is socialism or even communism. Norman Thomas gave some aid to this idea in 1933, during the honeymoon of the New Deal. Carried away by his enthusiasm, he hailed it as “a step toward socialism”, as “a revolution”. Now he swings just as far in the opposite direction, and sees little difference between Roosevelt and Landon, even while praising Roosevelt’s liberalism. We must declare Roosevelt’s policies as not socialism, nor a step to socialism. He at most tries to smooth out some of the worst abuses of capitalism, in order to give it a longer life. The reactionary cry of “socialism” is directed to two ends; first, to alarm all people of property to stampede them toward fascism; second, to discredit socialism among the masses by identifying it with the failures of the New Deal.

Between the two major parties, “socialism” is not an issue, but merely a demagogic war-cry of reaction. For the broad masses also, socialism is not the issue today, but rather the issue is, whether to move on the reactionary road toward fascism, or to struggle to maintain democratic rights, living standards, and peace. For the Farmer-Labor Party movement the issue is not between socialism and capitalism, but whether to move on the reactionary or progressive roads. We Communists, throwing our lot in with the Farmer-Labor Party movement, agree to fight for the road of progress under capitalism, together with those who are not adherents of socialism as we are; while at the same

time we point out that the only final guarantee of progress is to abolish capitalism and move to socialism.

Thus, we conclude that the direct issue of the 1936 elections is not socialism or capitalism, but rather democracy or fascism. At the same time we emphasize, and will always emphasize, that a consistent struggle for democracy and progress leads inevitably, and in the not distant future, to the socialist revolution.

This leads us to a concrete phase of the fight to defeat fascism in America of utmost importance, namely, by what means to combat and overcome the influence of the reactionaries among the broad masses. We identify the fascist trend with Wall Street, the Liberty League and the big capitalists; that is absolutely correct. At the same time, these fascist forces, playing upon the most backward instincts and moods among the masses, and even utilizing some of their more positive characteristics, exert tremendous and growing influence precisely among some of the most suffering and desperate strata of the population. Hearst, with his chain of demagogic newspapers, is the classic type. Father Coughlin, with his radio appeals to the common people and his Union for Social Justice, apes closely the technique of Mussolini and Hitler. Huey Long, before his death, was a veritable American Hitler in embryo, with his Share-the-Wealth Clubs and wild demagoguery. All appeal to very real grievances among the masses, they touch the sore spots of a suffering population, they rouse popular passions—only to direct them away from the real criminals, the Hearsts, du Ponts, Morgans, and against “the Jewish bankers”, against the foreign-born workers, against the Negroes, against “the Reds”, the Protestants against the Catholics and vice versa, and now above all they cry out against the “communist New Deal” and Roosevelt, until the election is over.

One of our sharpest criticisms against Roosevelt is that he has time and again given ammunition to the reactionary demagogues. Today, there is the greatest danger that the Townsend movement for old-age pensions, whose aspiration for security for the aged is socially progressive, may be swung into the most reactionary channel, into support for Landon, precisely because Roosevelt followed up a miserly “security” law by allowing without protest the shameful attack against the old-age pension movement

in the Congressional investigation committee. How eagerly Hearst, the *Chicago Tribune*, the Republicans, sprang forward to comfort Dr. Townsend, and inspire his denunciation of the "communitistic dictatorship" in the White House, his slogan "Anyone but Roosevelt" which really means "Nobody but Landon". The fire that puts steam into Father Coughlin's reactionary engine is built of real grievances against Roosevelt, and his retreat in face of that very reaction that Coughlin serves.

### *The Union Party Is a Stooge for Landon*

The self-styled "Union Party", secretly manufactured in the laboratory of Coughlin and Lemke, and sprung upon the world full-grown, bears all the earmarks of a Hearst-Landon-Liberty League intrigue. Lemke is clearly but a stooge for Landon. His program is a typical half-fascist hodge-podge of radical sounding phrases without any definite commitment on a single concrete issue before the country. It is even more dishonest than the Republican platform. It is a great mistake, however, to dismiss Lemke as a bad joke, just as it was a mistake to consider Hitler only a stupid clown in the Germany of 1931-32. When millions of people have burning grievances, when Roosevelt retreats from even his own inadequate and miserable relief and security standards, when the Socialist Party is only repeating sectarian formulae instead of helping organize a broad Farmer-Labor Party, when the big progressive unions hesitate to organize politically the discontented masses—then all these things make the masses desperate and lay them at the mercy of the fascist demagogues who are free with promises of all things to all men, but who are really in the pay of Wall Street and the Liberty League, in the service of the Republican Party. What is necessary to head off the Lemke-Hearst-Coughlin Union Party is a more serious movement toward unity of all the truly progressive forces, a unity that will give tangible promise of an effective Farmer-Labor Party this year, laying the basis for making it a major contender in 1940. The Communists will support every serious effort to unite the progressive forces against threatening reaction.

The only way to save these masses from the reactionaries is to go among them with a program of immediate struggle to

remedy their grievances now, to show them that the real progressives and the revolutionists are the best fighters for their immediate interests. Norman Thomas has rebuked us, because we followed such a course with the Townsend movement. We reply that it is there where we Communists established sympathetic contacts with Townsend's followers, where the movement toward Republican reaction is being blocked, where they are being won to the Farmer-Labor Party. Thomas' slogan, socialism *instead* of old-age pensions, only drives them quicker into the arms of the reactionaries who promise something now.

A tremendous ferment is going on among the masses. Only a small part of it is already organized in the Farmer-Labor Party movement. By no means is the rest of it all in the Coughlin and Townsend movements. Look, for example, at the famous EPIC movement in California, started by Upton Sinclair. After its first spectacular success in "capturing" the state Democratic Party, the EPIC movement went through a year and a half of varied and bitter experiences. Out of this, and out of the advice and criticism of the Communists who adopted a correctly friendly but critical attitude to the movement, EPIC has learned lessons that have gone deep. It is moving rapidly toward a Farmer-Labor Party in California that will be a major party in the state. In Washington the same process is going on; the Commonwealth Federation in that state (not to be confused with the small group of the same name in New York headed by Bingham), has now captured the state Democratic Party and at the same time is establishing links with the Farmer-Labor Party movement in the rest of the country.

The slogans of these varied movements, "production for use", "economy of abundance", "social justice", "economic justice", "share-the-wealth", "social security", etc., all reflect a strong mood of disillusionment with and criticism of the capitalist system; they show an understanding that our country has abundant material resources for a good life for all; they show a desperate searching for a new way of life and a willingness to try out new paths. They are all potentially revolutionary, they can be and must be won for socialism. But this can be done, not by abstract preachments about the glories of a new society, but

by the struggle today to improve life, by organization of the masses for this struggle, by systematic education through experience, and by the concrete example of a real socialism successfully built in the Soviet Union.

Let us summarize this examination of parties and issues in the 1936 campaign.

1. The chief enemy of the peace, freedom and prosperity of the American people is the Republican Party and its reactionary allies. Defeat the Landon-Hearst-Liberty League-Wall Street alliance!

2. Roosevelt and his administration are retreating before the attacks of reaction and surrendering position after position to the main enemy. Stop the surrender of our rights and interests in Washington!

3. The Socialist Party, after breaking loose from its reactionary Old Guard, is moving into the backwater of doctrinaire sectarianism, drifting out of the mass currents of American life. Win the Socialists for the people's united front, for the Farmer-Labor Party!

4. The Farmer-Labor Party is rapidly growing in states and localities, it is organizing itself on a national scale. Support the program and platform of the Chicago Farmer-Labor Party Conference, build the Farmer-Labor Party!

5. The Communist Presidential ticket is the only banner in the national elections rallying and organizing all the forces of the people against reaction, fascism, and war, building the people's front in the United States. Vote the Communist Presidential ticket!

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THREE

THE UNITED FRONT AND  
TRADE UNION UNITY

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**W**HAT we have said about parties and issues in the election campaign, and our policy of the united front therein, already gives us our main line of policy toward all other problems of the united front. It will be necessary briefly to review some of the most important of these problems, however, and especially the problems of the trade union movement.

Since our Eighth Convention, a little over two years ago, there has been a profound transformation in the trade union movement and in our Party's position in relation to it.

For years before our Eighth Convention, the trade union movement seemed to be frozen in a paralysis of reactionary policies and leadership. Stirrings, movements, struggles, seemed to be impossible under the dead hand of the American Federation of Labor leadership which stood like a blank wall in the path of progress. The masses which entered into battle despite this,



almost always had to find their organization and leadership outside the officially recognized trade union movement of the American Federation of Labor. The result had been the rise of a series of independent unions, in most cases comparatively small in membership, of which the most significant group were united in the Trade Union Unity League. It was in these independent unions that most of the Communist activity had been concentrated for several years.

At our Eighth Convention we already signalled the dawn of a new day in the trade union movement. The first year of the New Deal had witnessed a great influx of new members into the A. F. of L. unions, mostly from the mass production and basic industries and containing a high proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The pressure of unemployment and crisis conditions, the change in the composition of the membership, and the political upheavals taking place among the masses, had finally broken the old paralysis of reaction in the unions. Our Eighth Convention signallized this fundamental change taking place, shifted the center of gravity of our trade union work with great emphasis to work within the mass unions of the A. F. of L., and raised sharply the question of bringing the independent unions to an amalgamation with the American Federation unions.

This deep-going change in the direction of our trade union work could be carried out all the more successfully, because the rebirth of the A. F. of L. unions had been accompanied by a great expansion of the independent unions to many times their former size, strength and effectiveness. We therefore entered upon the new path with important weapons in the struggle for unity and militant policies.

It is true, however, that even in our Eighth Convention we did not fully foresee the rapidity and completeness with which the trade union movement was to be transformed. That is why, together with our entirely correct general policy, we also envisaged the possible rise of an independent federation of labor which did not take place. Very soon after the Eighth Convention we saw that the new currents were so strong and deep as to involve the entire trade union movement, and therefore dropped the idea of the possible rise of an independent federation.

Now, at our Ninth Convention, only a little more than two years later, we have such a new, and such a promising development in the trade unions such as few would have dared to predict in their most optimistic moments. What has taken place is truly a revolutionary transformation of trade union life in our country.

Powerful, dynamic forces have arisen, have found a leadership and a program above and below, have broken loose from the old paralysis of the reactionary A. F. of L. Executive Council, have struck out on new paths which open up great perspectives of power and progress for American labor.

### *A New Page in American Trade Union History*

At the head of this renaissance movement in the trade unions stands the Committee for Industrial Organization, with its group of ten important unions, including three of the most powerful in the A. F. of L., the United Mine Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the International Ladies Garment Workers.

While we meet, the Committee for Industrial Organization is launching the second great crusade to carry trade unionism into the open-shop citadel of monopoly capital, to the half-million slaves of the Steel Trust. Nothing so heartening has been seen in the labor movement since 1919, when the chairman of our Party, Comrade Foster, carried through the first great organizing campaign in steel which culminated in the great steel strike.

With the aid of the C.I.O. the automobile workers have overcome the sabotage of the A. F. of L. Executive Council, wiped out the divisions in their own ranks, and built the United Automobile Workers Industrial Union, already with 50,000 members and driving forward to organize the entire automotive industry.

With the aid of the C.I.O. the rubber workers have broken the bureaucratic regime set over them by Green, established their own elected leadership, won a great strike struggle, brought the majority of rubber workers into their union.

Soon we may expect to see the United Textile Workers, backed by the C.I.O., make a great drive to organize the hundreds of

thousands of cotton slaves of the reactionary Solid South, and establish in life by their own power that trade union organization that was promised and then stolen from them at the conclusion of their great strike in 1934.

The marine workers of the whole country, responding to the lead given by the Pacific Coast and their example of unification and militancy, have emerged as one of the major progressive forces in the labor movement. They are demonstrating what can be done, even in craft unions ridden by corrupt and reactionary officials, to win better conditions and move towards industrial unification.

Truly, these developments open an entirely new page in the history of trade unionism in America.

And just as truly we can say that this transformation would have been impossible without the energetic, persistent, well-planned and well-directed participation of the Communist Party and its followers in this movement. This great mass movement needed our still small Communist Party in order to achieve these results, just as we needed this great mass movement to find scope for our program and energies, to bring us once and for all out of our isolation into the broad streams of the mass life of America.

Some people unacquainted with the situation may think we are boasting when we speak of decisive contributions by our Communist Party to this great mass movement. We will not spend much time to prove the point. I am sure the other reports and discussions in this Convention, the very character of our delegations here, all leading fighters right out of the heat of the class struggles in all industries and all parts of the land, will give overwhelming evidence of our honorable and effective role. Let me cite only one example to establish my point:

The greatest impetus given to the organizing campaign in the steel industry, in its first days, has been the unexampled series of elections in the company unions of the very leaders of the drive for real trade unions, from the rank-and-file workers in the mills. Some people may think this is spontaneous. That would be a great mistake. It is the first large crop of the fruits of the Communist Party work to win the company unions for real trade unionism. This work we started for the first time in a systematic

fashion at our Eighth Convention two years ago. We had to overcome the prejudices and traditions of years among the trade union leadership. We had to combat the hostility or scepticism of almost everyone outside our own ranks. The Communist Party was the only organization that took up this task, stuck to it through years, and from small beginnings brought forth the great movement that greeted the decision of the C.I.O. and the Amalgamated Association to finally open the great organizing campaign. We are transforming the company unions, designed by the great Steel Barons as the citadels of the open shop, into the first strongholds of the new steel workers' union that is rising before our eyes. And by this we are teaching the whole American labor movement a lesson that it will never forget.

The Committee for Industrial Organization has taken up the task of organizing all the mass production industries of America in industrial unions. The success of this effort is a basic necessity upon which depends the future of the American labor movement in all other respects. The Communist Party unconditionally pledges its full resources, moral and material, to the complete execution of this great project.

### *The Reactionary Green-Woll-Hutcheson Clique*

It was inevitable that the sharp division within the official leadership of the A. F. of L. over the question of industrial versus craft unionism for the mass production industries should lead to a general polarization within the labor movement. That is exactly what we see happening. With craft unionism goes a whole system of reactionary policies in all fields, including subordination to the most reactionary bourgeois political circles. Thus we saw William Green appear at the Republican Convention with fascist political proposals. With industrial unionism logically goes a tendency toward a progressive political platform, moving in the direction of the Farmer-Labor Party. Thus we see the C.I.O. forces, while still supporting Roosevelt, yet organizing themselves independently, conducting a sharp struggle against the Republicans, not endorsing the Democratic Party, keeping friendly contact with the national Farmer-Labor Party

movement, and in many cases throwing their forces actively into local, Congressional, and state Farmer-Labor efforts.

The struggle for a united, strong American Federation of Labor requires today a concentration of all forces to halt the splitting plans of the Green-Woll-Hutcheson group heading the Executive Council. Their desperate determination to suspend the progressive unions, more than one-third of the Federation, to deprive them of the right to vote in the Convention, and thereby secure the necessary two-thirds vote required to expel them, is clearly a violation of the Constitution of the A. F. of L., as well as a reactionary crime against the working class. If the progressive forces stand steadfast, if they call up the support of all those in the craft unions who are progressives, then surely a smashing defeat can be given the splitting reactionaries, and the unity of the labor movement be maintained and extended to new millions of workers long outside.

One lesson that is vital to the progressive leadership in the C.I.O. unions, already partly learned but still neglected in some quarters, is the necessity of democratic procedure and methods of work in the inner life of the unions and in dealing with the unorganized. Only if the progressive unions become models of working class democracy can their full power be thrown into the fight to defeat the undemocratic and reactionary Executive Council.

The united front of all progressive forces in the trade union movement is the foundation and the driving force for all forward movement in American social life. It is the force that can draw around itself all other strata of the toiling population, making possible the building of a real people's front against reaction and war, composed of the great majority of the American people.

### *The Farmers and the Labor Movement*

*Farmers* constitute the largest and most important group which must be won to alliance with the labor movement. To do this requires that the labor movement take up and advance the demands of the farmers which are not inconsistent with the interests of the working class. That is why the Communist Party, which will try to win the farmers to support its ultimate pro-

gram of socialization of agriculture, today can give its full-hearted support to Section III of the Chicago Farmer-Labor platform, which was written by representatives of the farmers' organizations and endorsed unanimously by the Conference. This Section reads:

"III. Farmers: Recognizing that a farm family's labor constitutes a prior claim to his farm, home, chattels and livestock, we propose securing farmers against evictions or property seizure by long moratoriums; government refinancing of farm debts so as to reduce the interest rate to one and one-half per cent. We stand opposed to the policy of crop reduction and advocate an increase in the production of farm products to meet the food requirements of the nation with government guarantees of average cost of production. For the widest possible extension of democratically controlled farm cooperative enterprises under a program which protects the interests of farmers and consumers alike."

Around this program it is possible to rally a growing number of the farmers' organizations and quickly win the majority of farmers, especially the most impoverished farmers. This must be the central idea in our work on the countryside and among the various farm organizations. The growing agricultural workers' trade union movement should be more closely linked up with the progressive movement among the farmers, thus strengthening its political activity, and serving as a link between city and country. In every state there is a considerable agricultural population; it is the duty of our Party organizations everywhere to establish connections there, and proceed to build most seriously the united front.

### *The Youth and the Future of America*

*Youth* occupies the country's attention as never before in history. That is because, as never before, the young people are in revolt against the conditions imposed upon them by the crisis. It is a great satisfaction to record that in the U.S.A., contrary to the experience in some countries, fascism has made relatively less inroads among the youth than among the older strata of the population. It is precisely among the younger generation that we witness the broadest progressive united front, which has risen

under the banner of the American Youth Congress, involving the majority of important youth mass organizations from church bodies to Communists.

The Declaration of Rights of the Young Generation, adopted at the Second Youth Congress last July, is a basic program to organize the youth of our country against fascism and war.

A cornerstone of this broad program is the American Youth Act, a legislative proposal which the Youth Congress drew up and caused to be introduced in Congress by Senator Benson of Minnesota. This Youth Act contains eight basic features, with which our whole movement should thoroughly familiarize itself. These features are:

1. Providing a system of vocational training and employment on public enterprises for the youth from 16 to 25 years, at regular wages.

2. Wages in such public enterprises shall be equal to prevailing trade union rates for the work performed, but in no case less than \$15 per week.

3. All needy high school students are to receive governmental assistance for living expenses, at a rate not less than \$15 per month.

4. A system of academic projects is to be established for needy college students, paying not less than \$25 per month.

5. The Act is to be administered by joint committees composed of representatives of labor, youth, and consumers' organizations.

6. The benefits of the Act extend to all youth without discrimination because of nativity, sex, race, color, religion, or political opinions or affiliations.

7. No youth shall be disqualified because of past or present participation in strikes or refusal to work for less than trade union wages.

8. These measures are to be financed by taxes on inheritances, gifts, and incomes, corporate or individual, of over \$5,000 per year.

The Young Communist League, with the assistance of the Party, has from the beginning played an important part in building the Youth Congress movement and formulating its program and activities. Working modestly, loyally, and energetically, the

Young Communists have won a myriad of friends and a secure place in the movement. Their work can serve as a model for the older generation.

In this great movement of the younger generation, the progressive forces got the jump on the reactionaries and fascists. We must sound a note of warning to our young people, however, that their path will not be so smooth in the next period as in the last. The reactionaries are organizing their forces for a big drive to win the youth. Only in struggle can the youth organizations be kept on the progressive path, a struggle that will affect the inner life of every mass organization. The leading personnel of the youth movement must gird itself for the battle, sharpen its weapons of social and political understanding, train itself organizationally, consolidate its forces.

Another great victory for the united front among the youth was the successful unification of the National Student League and the Student League for Industrial Democracy into the new American Student Union.

In both these youth organizations, various political affiliations are united on special youth problems. There is now being felt more and more the need for a united political movement of the most advanced youth, a united youth league standing on the political platform of the people's front, the Farmer-Labor Party. Experiences in many places, especially in Minnesota, suggest that such a united youth league may arise as the junior section of the Farmer-Labor Party. This should receive serious examination and discussion.

The rise of a broad youth movement has served to awake the trade unions to the necessity of special work among the youth. The resolution on this question at the last A. F. of L. convention was an important step in this direction. It must be followed up systematically.

Our Eighth Convention placed the youth question as the concern of the entire Party. The results since then, even with inadequate attention by the Party committees, have been most valuable. Tenfold progress will be made when every Party committee takes up this question, giving guidance and aid to the young people. This Convention must begin an even brighter



period in the youth movement. Who wins the youth wins the future of America.

### *The Possibilities for a Women's Mass Movement*

*Women* are at least half of the population, and a very energetic and active half. Yet we do not see this recognized fully. Among the youth, there is an awakening to this fact, with the girls playing an important and growing part in the movement from top to bottom. Elsewhere we lag behind. In work among the women we must admit, to our shame, that the reactionaries are more active, and work more intelligently than do we and our friends.

Yet we have examples that could teach us, if we are willing, of the enormous importance and great achievements possible in organizing the women, in developing leading people among them. Examine, for instance, the great political victory of the election of Mary Zuk to the city council of Hamtramck, Michigan. Mary Zuk became an important political figure, not only in her industrial suburb of Detroit, but nationally; she leads a movement that plays a decisive role in the life of her community. The starting point of this achievement was a movement of the women to struggle against the high prices of meat. The women acted on a small issue of daily life; they did not allow their action to remain isolated; they reached out and involved the trade unions, the fraternal orders, the whole community.

Why has our Party not taken this outstanding example of achievement among women, in drawing women into leadership of a great mass movement, to study it and apply its lessons everywhere? Why do we continue going around in the same old circles, repeating the old magic formulae, when we have such rich experiences to guide us to more fruitful activity?

There are hundreds of thousands of women in the trade unions, there are multiplied numbers in industry still unorganized, there are millions of women in mass organizations of varied sorts. Their problems are growing more difficult, they are searching for answers, for a new way out, just as we have seen among the youth. All the possibilities exist for a women's movement on the same scale as the youth movement. It is the task of our

Party to find and develop those women with the capacity of creating and leading such a movement.

### *The Party of the Negro People*

*The Negro people* are an important section of the workers, the farmers, the youth, the women. But they have another characteristic, in that they are an oppressed nationality, suffering double oppression. We can never allow this to be overlooked in any field of work. It creates a special task, to rouse and organize the Negro masses for their own protection, and win the white masses to firm solidarity with the Negroes in this struggle.

Significant progress has been made in building the united front of struggle for Negro liberation. The National Negro Congress, which met in Chicago in February and established a permanent organization, found the correct road to a broad unity of the varied progressive forces among the Negro people and their friends. It is a broad people's movement, which at the same time has a firm working class core of Negro trade unions and working class leaders. Communists and all progressives can well continue to give it their energetic and steadfast support.

Communists, while a small minority in this big movement, have earned an unchallenged place in it by their services in the struggle for Negro rights. What Negro in America is there who does not know of the Scottsboro boys, of their defense by the I.L.D., of what the Communists have done to save them, of our part in bringing into existence the broad united front that now promises to tear them from the clutches of the Alabama lynchers? What Negro in America has not become acquainted with the name of Angelo Herndon; who does not know something of the heroism and clarity of vision and understanding of this exemplary Communist?

The position won by our Party among the Negro masses carries with it corresponding responsibilities. The Negro people have learned to expect and demand from Communists the greatest sensitivity to their problems, the greatest energy in their defense, the closest solidarity in their struggles. We are proud of this position, we are proud of our pioneering work in the dark re-

gions of the Solid South, we are proud to be spoken of as "the party of the Negroes". We will defend and advance this position at all costs.

*National unification of the unemployed organizations* is one of our outstanding achievements of the united front since our Eighth Convention. We Communists were the pioneers in this, as in many other fields. The unemployed movement dates from the great nationwide demonstrations of March 6, 1930, called by our Party, for which we paid the heavy price of prison terms for Comrades Foster, Minor, Amter, and Raymond. These demonstrations gave birth to the National Unemployed Council movement in July, 1930. When later other forces entered the field, notably the Socialists, and a multiplicity of organizations sprang up, it was the Communists who raised the slogan of national unification, fought for it consistently, and finally brought about the merger of all into the Workers Alliance which is now a broad, all-inclusive national organization of the unemployed movement.

Let us remember the central role played in this unification by the fight for the Workers' Unemployment, Old-Age and Social Insurance Bill. This Bill was first worked out by the Communists, introduced in Congress by the Farmer-Labor Congressman Lundeen, and later amplified and perfected in its present form, the Frazier-Lundeen Bill, by the Inter-Professional Association and the Joint Committee for Social Insurance. The Congressional hearings on the Workers' Bill, which won a favorable report from the Labor Committee of the House and 52 votes for the Bill on the floor of Congress, will for long stand as the authoritative handbook on unemployment insurance problems in America. The campaign for the Workers' Bill taught the whole progressive movement its most basic lessons in effective mobilization of the masses for social aims.

This report will not deal with the multitude of practical problems now facing the unemployed movement. There will be a special report on this subject. It will suffice at this point to emphasize the importance, the central role, of the unemployed movement, the necessity of constant attention to help work out its problems, to strengthen the leading personnel in this work, and

constantly to maintain its vital connections with the whole labor movement, with the whole people's front.

The next stage of the movement, which will involve the whole people's front, will add to the issue of unemployment insurance a more concrete campaign to provide jobs, to open up the factories, to put America back to work at trade union wage rates.

### *For a United Labor Defense*

*A united labor defense movement* is becoming a pressing necessity with the growing attacks upon the democratic rights and civil liberties of the toiling population. The International Labor Defense is unquestionably the outstanding and most effective organization in this field. It has a fine record of achievements. But it is still too narrow to meet the needs of the day. Many forces which must be united do not yet accept the I.L.D. as their common organ. I am sure the leading comrades of the I.L.D. will agree with me when I declare that we are willing to meet all groups interested in a united labor defense movement, and work out a platform and plan of organization acceptable to all, upon which all can unite. I am sure that such a united movement will have the enthusiastic endorsement of Tom Mooney, J. B. McNamara, the Scottsboro boys, Herndon, the Alabama and Arkansas sharecroppers and tenants, the Sacramento prisoners in California, and the thousands of workers everywhere who are suffering longer or shorter prison terms, who feel the daily need of united forces in the fight for civil rights.

### *Organizing the Forces for Peace*

*The American League Against War and Fascism* is one of the outstanding examples of a broad people's front organized around issues affecting the whole population. Its Third Congress, held in Cleveland last January, registered a representation of mass organizations of the most varied kind with a membership of over three millions. This included trade unions, mostly A. F. of L., comprising about 20 per cent of the organized labor movement, over 600,000 members. Its local committees and district conferences have involved even broader masses. Its program has brought

the beginnings of clarity and unity into the chaotic peace movement of the United States.

It is impossible to speak of the American League and its work, without noting the outstanding contribution of its tireless and devoted Chairman, Dr. Harry F. Ward. Such selfless and consistent service to a progressive cause, as Dr. Ward has given, will always receive the unstinted recognition and support of the Communist Party.

It is a matter of regret to us that the Socialist Party, nationally and in most states, is still outside the American League, and indeed outside of any organized movement against war and fascism. This can hardly be caused by the issues standing between Socialists and Communists on the war question, as the American League program does not attempt as yet to answer these controversial issues. Indeed, the Socialists have not seriously criticized its platform. Within the League, the Communists are a very small minority. We can hardly be expected to take seriously the proposal, from Socialist and Lovestoneite sources, that the League should dissolve itself in the dim hope that something broader would thereupon magically spring upon the scene. The League is already a great mass movement. We will be glad to cooperate in making it even broader than it is. The Third Congress in January adopted a special resolution to this effect. There are reasons to hope that in the next period serious re-enforcements will join with the League. We ask our Socialist friends, can they afford to continue their isolation from this great movement?

The coming World Peace Congress, called for Geneva in September, to which the American League Against War and Fascism is sending a delegation in common with most of the other peace societies in the country, including the National Peace Conference and the League of Nations Society, should be the occasion for an all-round strengthening of the League in every locality, in organizational support, in activity and personnel. The World Peace Congress movement comprises the bulk of the peace movement of Europe, including the great trade union federations and the most important Socialist and labor parties. It is an unexampled opportunity to face and solve the problem of working out a single united international peace policy, in which the spe-

cial American angles can be brought forward and solved in consultation with the rest of the world.

Summarizing this outline of the most important problems of the united front and trade union unity, we can say:

Since our Eighth Convention, the mass movement for unity against the forces of reaction, fascism and war has registered a great upsurge. In most fields, especially in the trade unions, our Party correctly foresaw this movement, placed itself at the head of the struggle for unity, and can record substantial progress in that direction. But the movement is only in its beginnings. Hundredfold progress must be made. There is no room for satisfaction, for resting on our oars. Weaknesses and shortcomings in our methods of work, clumsiness and routine handling of problems, remnants of sectarianism, still hold back the movement. The solution of these problems and weaknesses lies, for the Communist Party, in the building, strengthening, and political development of our Party members and leading personnel.

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FOUR

BUILDING THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY

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**I**N what direction are we moving and what is our tempo in the question of building the Communist Party as the mass party of the American toilers?

We can obtain a rough measurement by a comparison of our position, in numbers and certain indices of the quality of our work, at the Eighth Convention in 1934 and today at the Ninth Convention.

At the Eighth Convention, the membership of the Party was approximately 25,000; of the Young Communist League about 5,000, or a total of 30,000 organized Communists.

Today at the Ninth Convention, the Party membership is around 40,000, the Y.C.L. about 11,000, or a total of over 50,000 organized Communists. This is an increase of 66 per cent in two years, or 500 per cent increase since 1929.

The first test of the quality of our Party work is the unity of the Party. At our Eighth Convention we could already speak of the final liquidation of past divisions and factionalism which had cursed the previous history of the movement. This Ninth Convention registers a unity of higher quality, forged in the fires of two difficult and complicated years in which rapid and fundamental readjustments of policy and tactics, carried through successfully with great gains, have created among our members and supporters a deep confidence in the Party line and our ability to execute it in life. Our Party today not only understands the value of its unity and discipline; it knows how to guarantee that unity in the spirit of Lenin and Stalin.

In this year of political ferment and upheaval, it is of interest to record the fact that every important (and many an unimportant) political party and grouping has suffered serious inner struggles and splits—with the single exception of the Communist Party.

The splits in the Republican, Democratic, and Socialist Parties are well known. The A. F. of L. leadership has lost even its formal unity of past years and is openly grouping in two fundamentally opposing camps. The Townsend movement is going through serious convulsions, and its leadership is sharply divided. Father Coughlin thought it necessary to expel the majority of the first group of district leaders elected by the National Union for Social Justice. The EPIC movement in California has serious divisions and desertions. The kaleidoscopic splittings and reunifications among the Trotskyite groups defy description. Even that old mummy, the Socialist-Labor Party, revived sufficiently to suffer a major split that gave birth to a new baby mummy. But the unity of the Communist Party has become ever more solid and fundamental. Even the most incorrigible gossips have ceased of necessity to speculate about divisions in our ranks.

This is because Communist Party unity is based on the teachings of our great leaders Lenin and Stalin.

### *The Unity and Discipline of the Communist Party*

There are people who profess to find in our unity and discipline an argument against the Communist Party. They describe



it as mechanical uniformity and an inner-party dictatorship. We can only smile at such lack of understanding.

The Communist Party has iron unity and discipline. This is based upon an inner-party democracy, of a richness and completeness which no other political party can even dream about. It is based upon an active membership, fully participating in shaping every angle of Party life, of which there is no counterpart in any other existing organization. It is based upon that confidence which grows out of the experience of finding the Party emerge successful from every testing in struggle of its policies.

This principle which underlies the unity and discipline of our Party was expressed in the following words of Stalin:

“Iron discipline in the Party is impossible without unity of will and without absolute and complete unity of action on the part of all members of the Party. This does not mean, of course, that the possibility of a struggle of opinions within the Party is thus excluded. On the contrary, iron discipline does not exclude, but presupposes, criticism and struggle of opinion within the Party. Least of all does it mean that this discipline must be ‘blind’ discipline. On the contrary, iron discipline does not exclude but presupposes conscious and voluntary submission, for only conscious discipline can be truly iron discipline. But after the discussion has been closed, after criticism has run its course and a decision has been made, unity of will and action of all Party members become indispensable conditions without which Party unity and iron discipline in the Party are inconceivable.”

The same thought is further elaborated by Lenin:

“How is the discipline of a revolutionary Party of the proletariat maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard, by its devotion, by its firmness, self-sacrifice and heroism. Secondly, by its ability to link itself with, to keep in close touch with, and to a certain degree if you wish, *merge itself with the broadest masses of the toilers*, primarily with the proletarians, *but also with the non-proletarian toiling masses*. Thirdly, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard and by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided that the broadest masses become convinced of this correctness *by their own experience*. Without these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party that is really capable of being the party of the advanced class, whose mission is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to transform the whole society, cannot be achieved. Without these conditions all attempts to establish discipline

are inevitably transformed into trifling phrase-mongering and empty gestures."

What our critics have in mind, when they attack our Party unity and discipline, is usually their opposition to decisive action to carry out the Party policy. When they speak for "democracy", what they really defend is the unlimited freedom of discussion without ever coming to a binding decision, the freedom of factions and faction struggle, and the right of irresponsible gossip—three characteristics of the inner-party life of the Socialist Party, which we do not envy them, which we have no wish to take over. Our discussions must always be directed toward a decision which binds us all; without this there is no true democracy. We tolerate no factional organization within our Party which destroys the Party's capacity for action. We burn out any tendency to irresponsible gossip with a red-hot iron; criticism means the right openly to raise questions in the Party units and committees, it excludes the gossip of the small cliques, the cafeteria tables, and mutual admiration circles.

### *High Quality of Leading Personnel*

What is the central weakness in our work of building a mass Party on these principles of Lenin and Stalin?

It is the insufficient number of politically trained and technically skilled leading people, the shortage of adequately prepared officers to lead the mass army which we are recruiting.

The best policy in the world turns out in life to be no better than the people who must execute it, who must apply it to the thousand variable conditions of daily life. Application of policy among the masses is first of all a problem of securing a high quality of leading personnel.

This becomes our central problem in Party building, at a moment when great masses are swinging over to our side, when in the shortest possible time we must transform these masses into an iron army of the revolution.

We are not adequately providing a leading personnel to these masses who are coming to us. We attack this problem in a desultory, unorganized, and mechanical fashion, without thinking out the problem fundamentally. The result is the too slow growth

of our Party, and the still high losses from among our new recruits, the still low quality of much of our work among the masses.

Is there any shortage of potential leading forces which can meet all our needs? Not at all. Among the new tens of thousands coming into our ranks we have all the forces we need. *But we are not using them adequately.* Our leading forces tend to petrify in closed circles of the oldest Party comrades. The new active elements, potential leaders, are not systematically brought forward and trained for their tasks.

Unless we remedy this weakness in our work, we will be unable to accomplish the next task, that is, the building of a Party of a hundred thousand members of even higher quality than our present Party of fifty thousand.

What are the main points of a consistent personnel policy? Comrade Dimitroff gave the four leading thoughts on the question of the standards to apply in selecting and promoting leading personnel. These points are:

1. Absolute devotion to the working class, loyalty to the Party, tested in struggle and under the enemy's persecution.
2. Closest possible contact with the masses; only if the masses accept a person as a leader can the Party do so.
3. Ability to make decisions, to find the correct course independently, to take responsibility and initiative.
4. Discipline and steadfastness in the struggle against the class enemy, as well as against all deviations from the correct Party line.

Some of our comrades, who in the past have thought of the qualities of leadership largely in terms of speaking and writing, will be astonished to find these qualifications not mentioned in these four main points. We must finally learn, throughout the Party, that speaking and writing well are of importance *only* when they are developed upon the foundation of the four points of Dimitroff.

To select and promote leadership upon this basis, we must first of all study the human material with which we are working. We must know our people, their qualities, their strength and their weakness, their capacities of development.

At the present moment, a first consideration in promoting new

forces is to find capable *native Americans*. From top to bottom of our Party the predominance in leading personnel must belong to the native people most closely corresponding to the composition of the masses of the population among whom we are working in each particular city, factory, neighborhood, or mass organization.

Systematic guidance, assistance, and training must be given to the leading personnel selected for promotion. Every leading Party member must assume this task as part of his daily life, not only in Party schools, but in all our work. The special problems of each person must be considered, his preferences and qualifications must be considered in assignment of work, and special help given to overcome special difficulties.

Finally, the whole Party life must be organized on the principle of making every Party member into a leader among the masses. Every member must assume the task of leading and educating at least *one* worker outside the Party; he shall consider himself a real Bolshevik only when fifty to a hundred workers regularly look to him for guidance and leadership in the problems of the class struggle.

We must do away with the reluctance to advance new forces to leadership. We are in a revolutionary epoch which, Lenin pointed out, is to a Communist Party what wartime is to an army. Lenin told us:

“We must extend the ranks of our army, transfer it from a peace to a war strength, mobilize the reservists, call up all those on furlough, organize new auxiliary corps, units and services. We must not forget that in war it is inevitable and necessary to fill the ranks with less trained recruits, very often to put rank-and-file soldiers in the place of officers, and to speed up and simplify the promotion of soldiers to the rank of officers.”

We must guide the great recruitment of new members into our Party which is now beginning, to insure that it shall especially strengthen the Party among the workers in the basic and key industries.

To better adjust our Party to its mass work, there is now required a simplification of our Party structure. Districts must be based upon state lines; Sections must conform to the established political subdivisions within the state. The units must be formed

with a view to the conditions and tasks confronting them. The dues system must be changed to eliminate unnecessary bookkeeping and routine, and to lighten the burden on the members; monthly instead of weekly dues must be the rule, and the amount to be paid by those in the lower categories of wage-rates shall be reduced. The international assessment, now paid monthly in a sum equal to the weekly dues, shall be changed to quarterly and equal the monthly dues.

We now must popularize our press and literature, in contents and circulation, more decisively than we have done heretofore. We have made certain improvements, but not enough. Our *Sunday Worker*, with a regular circulation of 120,000, is our greatest single achievement. But it is far from sufficient. The number of local papers is increasing, and their quality improves; but this also does not keep pace with the developments among the masses. Circulation of books and pamphlets in 1935 reached almost two and a half million copies, compared to slightly more than a million in 1934; but clearly the five million mark must be the minimum for 1936. Press and literature is the fundamental weapon of mass education.

Above all, in our speeches, leaflets and literature, we must more and more learn to speak the language of the masses. We must speak in terms of the concrete current problems, of the immediate struggle for a better life.

The Communist Party must use the opportunity of this election campaign to smash once and for all the superstition, which has been embodied in a maze of court decisions having the force of law, that our Party is an advocate of force and violence, that it is subject to laws (Federal immigration laws, state "criminal syndicalism" laws directed against such advocacy. The Communist Party is not a conspirative organization, it is an open revolutionary Party, continuing the traditions of 1776 and 1861; it is the only organization that is really entitled by its program and work to designate itself as "sons and daughters of the American revolution". Communists are not anarchists, not terrorists. The Communist Party is a legal party and defends its legality. Prohibition of advocacy of force and violence does not apply to the Communist Party; it is properly applied only to the Black Legion,

the Ku Klux Klan, and other fascist groupings, and to the strike-breaking agencies and the open-shop employers who use them against the working class, who are responsible for the terrible toll of violence which shames our country.

We are going into the 1936 election campaign to win the masses to the people's front against reaction, fascism, and war. Our program is directed to maintain peace, and to advance the economic interests and democratic rights of the workers, farmers, and impoverished middle classes.

This is a fight for liberty for the masses of the people. We are the party of socialism, of the proletarian revolution, of Soviet power. The doctrinaires of all shades shout against us that to take up the fight for liberty is to abandon the fight for socialism; such people would make of socialism a product of the study room and laboratory. But socialism will come out of life, out of the class struggle. Only by rousing and organizing millions of people in the fight for liberty can we bring these millions to the fight for socialism; only that Party which is the vanguard of millions in their first struggles will lead these millions to the final struggle of the socialist revolution. Our slogan is the slogan of Lenin: "Through liberty to socialism!"

Forward in the struggle for a new and better life for the masses!

Forward to a free, peaceful, prosperous and happy America!

