

DEBATE

*Which Road for American Workers,
Socialist or Communist?*

Norman Thomas
vs
Earl Browder

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK
November 27, 1935

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Published by
SOCIALIST CALL
21 E. 17th Street, New York, N. Y.

January, 1936

Price, 10c

FOREWORD

The thousands who jammed Madison Square Garden on the night of November 27th, 1935, came to hear two outstanding exponents of conflicting proletarian thought defend and attack. But it was not merely an evening of entertainment for the audience; it was an occasion for clarification in a time of much doubt and groping, when revolutionary changes are taking place, if not visibly in the body of society at least in the minds of thinking men and women. The radical movement in general is swept today by many winds of confusion. New sects are springing up to take their places in the scrimmage of the old groups; committees and leagues for the formation of new parties and new internationals are sowing their leaflets over a soil that is believed fertile. And all speak with authority as the keepers of the true Marxian faith.

The debate between Norman Thomas, the national leader of the Socialist Party, and Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party, reported in these covers, was a historic one—but not merely, as some have alleged, because it was run on so gigantic a scale before an audience of 25,000 people, nor as others have mistakenly claimed because it was the first appearance of Socialist and Communist leaders on the same platform. Debates before large audiences and between such speakers have been held any number of times. What made the debate historic was the fact that it was the first verbal bout between two schools of thought that had not been brought to the platform before, namely, Socialism as against the "new line" Communism of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International.

The Socialist Call, the Socialist weekly, which arranged the debate and is now publishing the stenographic record as a permanent contribution to revolutionary thinking, has naturally differed vigorously with the Communist program and also with the philosophy of the Seventh World Congress and its approach to the problem of war which looms so darkly on the horizon at this moment. The debate was intended to help in the clarification of such issues, and judging from the discussion it has aroused even in non-radical circles, it has done much in that direction.

Beyond this, it is hardly proper for a mere foreword to make comment, either on the subject matter of the debate or on the personalities of the protagonists. The reader will form his own judgment.

CHAIRMAN Krzycki: Now, Comrades, while the two chief participants in this all-important discussion are putting the final touches to their memoranda, I am asked to pinch-hit. We saw fit to meet at a time which marks the sixth anniversary of the crash, called the depression, and the third year of the New Deal, and while Wall Street is giving evidence to again start out on a very brief dizzy spree, there are ten millions, at least, who are still totally out of a job, and many more millions who receive cold, humiliating charity, in the richest country in the world. It is also significant that we are meeting shortly after the most important labor convention in the history of the labor movement had its meeting. It is indeed encouraging to us radicals in the political and trade-union movement to witness at least six outstanding, powerful aggressive unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor coming to the conclusion that the millions of workers in the United States cannot possibly be lifted out of the capitalistic hell if the labor movement clings to the old cobweb policy of the craft unions. (Applause) And there are those of us who are indeed cheered by the launching of these powerful labor groups of a crusade for the purpose of educating and organizing the millions of unorganized workers.

However, those of us who are privileged to observe both the political and the economic movements, we know only too well, from bitter experience, that unless labor obtains political power, it will not get very far, even though it does organize on an industrial basis rather than on a craft basis. As long as the power to issue injunctions and to send out militia to shoot down defenseless, unarmed workers, as long as the power to declare laws unconstitutional is on the side of the exploiters, labor will have indeed a hard and rough road to travel.

And so, in view of these most recent happenings in the labor movement, it is indeed timely that so many thousands of men and women turn out to participate in a discussion of a question that is indeed very much before the mass of the working class.

I take it that you know that the subject that we are presenting to you is entitled, "Which Road for the American

I take it that you know that the subject that we are presenting to you is entitled, "Which Road for the American Workers—Communism or Socialism?" Both political groups engaging in this discussion went out of their way in finding spokesmen, who, in their opinion, because of their experience and because of their daily contact with the workers and farmers, are best qualified to represent their particular side of the question.

We are first to look upon and hear one who has appeared on this platform on many previous occasions, one with whom I have been for many years very closely associated and I have frequently found myself in a double-harness with him in labor struggles, and I now present to you Norman Thomas, to present the Socialist's side. (The audience arose and applauded.)

OPENING SPEECH OF NORMAN THOMAS

NORMAN THOMAS: Comrade Chairman, Comrades and friends, this, I trust, will be an occasion worthy of the magnificent audience that has gathered. It will be a debate, and a genuine debate, but it will, I trust, not be a debate like a high school contest for points. It will not be a debate such as lawyers are familiar with, who must win their case at all costs, even the cost of truth itself. It will not, I trust, be a debate such as old men might indulge in, whose minds are so turned to the past that they can remember what has been but never look forward to what ought to be. (Applause.)

It is a debate where we shall compare our minds, because, however great may be the differences between us, we are in the presence of a common danger. We do face a common enemy. We live in time of a common crisis, and we have seen how great tragedies have come to the world, when men who, at least, ought to have cooperated to some extent, have had to learn painfully the arts of cooperation in a concentration camp maintained by their enemy. (Applause.)

It is, I think, particularly appropriate that this magnificent audience should be gathered here in Madison Square Garden, because it was not, after all, so very long ago that Madison Square Garden saw the bitterest expression of lack of cooperation, saw the Communist attack upon a meeting of Socialists and trade unionists gathered to commemorate the bravery of working class Austrian soldiers and martyrs. That is a thing which now belongs to the past. (Applause.)

Necessarily, in the limited time that we have, both Earl Browder and I will have to dwell on some of the points that are under discussion. Let me, therefore, now, by way of emphasis, make certain things clear: I reserve the right to speak of lessons that to my mind can be learned from Russia's mistakes, as well as from Russia's glorious victories, but I want to make it as plain as words can make it, that I regard the achievement in Russia as the one outstanding achievement, the one bright pillar of hope, in the turbulent, confused world of the last few years. (Applause and cheering) [We will have to ask for time out as in a football game if you keep on like this!]

I want to make one more preliminary point—and you should get this too; it is a statement of enormous importance: With all my heart and soul and mind and strength, I condemn the policy of red-baiting in or out of the American Federation of Labor, as a policy wholly opposed to Socialist Ideals. (Applause.) There is one test and one test only that can fairly be applied in any movement; there is one test and one test only that can fairly be applied in any labor union, and that is a test which must be applied to men of all beliefs, to Communists, to Socialists, to Catholics, to Republicans, to Democrats—it is the test of action; it is the test of loyalty, it is the test of abstention from all that would betray the standards of labor or would divide its ranks without excuse. It is by that test and that test only, by the test of overt act, that men in the labor movement must be judged. This I say in order to clear the air, and to make possible a further discussion of the issues before us.

I do not suppose that many in this house, certainly not many Socialists, certainly not many Communists will want to quarrel with the statement that tonight Earl Browder and I unite in general on our diagnosis of what is wrong with America and with the world. It is a diagnosis that as yet the American masses have not accepted. It is a diagnosis which our farmers and our workers and our professional people have not accepted. They are still looking for some patent medicine, some cough drop to cure tuberculosis, some salve to end cancer. At least, we unite on this platform in knowing that the end of the intolerable exploitation, the end of war, the end of insecurity, the end of poverty, can only be won by men and women who struggle forward for plenty and peace and freedom, on the basis of planning,

planning for abundance, planning which is made possible because at last collectively workers with hand and brain own the great natural resources and the great instruments of production and distribution. Then at last we shall be conquerors of the predatory society which in one form or the other has long cursed the earth. We can do it only by struggle and it is of the terms and the nature of the struggle that we are talking tonight.

I am a Socialist because I want a fellowship of free men on earth.

I am a Socialist because I believe loyalty to the working class is better expressed when we do not indulge in a kind of mass abstraction or mass worship, when we hold, even in a transition period, such civil and religious liberty as has been painfully won.

I am a Socialist because I want more liberty than we ever can have under capitalism, and I do not think we have to wait for all that individual liberty until at last socialism is securely established here all over the earth.

I am a Socialist because I believe in the processes of democracy. There never can be perfect socialism without perfect democracy, or perfect democracy without perfect socialism.

I am a Socialist, because, while we struggle toward that end, which we have not reached as yet, we need democracy within the party. It may stumble and it may fail from time to time, but I trust the democracy of a party more than I trust a rule from on top, a centralization so great that orders are handed down from Moscow as in fact they have been handed down since the formation of the Third International, so that some of you have been made rather dizzy changing your minds to keep up with the correct line.

I am a Socialist because I am afraid of the over-centralization of bureaucracy, even in a noble cause. I know that in this time, so great are the powers of destruction which machinery and power and mechanical energy give to men, that it is of the utmost importance that we should organize every force to minimize violence, even in the best service of the cooperative commonwealth. And for that reason, I want to put the emphasis upon what we can do in orderly fashion, and the blame for what violence may come, upon those stubborn and benighted men who would wreck the world before they would yield their power to hurt or destroy.

I am a Socialist because I think it is very poor strategy to put the kind of emphasis that Communists have put in America upon the inevitability of great scale violence, and of a dictatorship, described as a dictatorship of the proletariat, and as equivalent to a working class democracy, but which is in effect a dictatorship of one party, and not a control by the working class.

That is why I am a Socialist, not because we have made our party perfect—far from it—but because its ideals seem best to enable us to carry on what is true and vital in American tradition, to fulfill the American Declaration of Independence, and indeed all worthy traditions of brotherhood and justice under the demands of this age of power-driven machinery.

I have made a brief but positive statement. I think it is now necessary for me to turn to an examination of the position or the line of the Communists, especially where it differs from the position I have stated. It is not so easy to turn to examine the Communist's line, not so easy now as it would have seemed a few months ago, because the line itself to some of us seems bewilderingly different; in some respects, much better—witness this meeting. In some respects, no better at all.

Very well, then, what about this Communist line as it looks to a Socialist? Let us begin by seeing in Russia what it is that some of us Socialists fear. There have been great achievements in a country whose rulers are dedicated, passionately dedicated, to the abolition of the profit system, and to providing abundance for all. But, what troubles us in Russia and in the Communist's statement of the Russian case, or what has heretofore been the statement of the case, is the fact that we do not observe the withering away of dictatorship as fast as some of us had hoped when the original revolutionary emergency had passed. We do not observe that that country which seems to be the securest in all Europe of the great nations, at least, has yet extended the civil liberty which we think is part of the heritage that men ought to struggle for. We were greatly troubled that after the criminal assassination of Kirov there was an answering terror so that more than one hundred people on the black-list of the Soviet were put to death, without trial, which connected them specifically with the crime. We want justice for the individual even in times like this. We are disturbed

because scores of men and women in Russia, besides those executed following the criminal assassination of Kirov, faced new rigors of imprisonment or surveillance. The things that disturb us sorely arise in part from the very nature of bureaucratic dictatorship. We are disturbed by the terrible costliness of the process of agricultural collectivization. You cannot, our Communist friends, come before America, and tell American workers, in the country or in the city, that the price of a desirable agricultural collectivization is a loss of perhaps one to five million lives—an unnecessary loss of life, it seems to me, in view of all the facts.

These things trouble us, and it is because of these tendencies that we have observed in Communism, that we cry out, "The Socialist way is the way for American workers to follow at the present time."

And we are disturbed, too, at the record that Communism has made outside of Russia. Oh, by no means is it all bad. I want now to express what I have expressed a score of times before, namely, my admiration for the courage, the gallantry, the devotion with which Communists have pushed their cause. It is something from which all of us can learn (applause) but at the same time, that cause has been pushed in a way to bring disruption into labor's ranks.

Suppose the line that Comrade Browder is going to advocate tonight had been advocated in Germany five years ago, six years ago, seven years ago, might not history have been different? Suppose that the present Communist position about a united people's front had been taken earlier? I think then there would have been no time when Communists and Nazis made common cause, as they did in one or two strikes and elections in Germany, notably in the famous Prussian plebiscite or referendum. History might have been different if this new line had been adopted earlier there. I do not acquit the German Social Democrats, from all the responsibility for the tragic failure, when I say that the primary cause of the bitter division in labor ranks was the sectarian line, the insistence that it was not Fascism, but the Social Fascists, that is to say, the Social Democrats, who were the peril. And something of the same sort has been true here. Reaction in the American Trade Union movement has been intensified by Communist disruptive tactics in unions. We have had altogether too much of an anything-to-win attitude. Lies and slander were holy if they were in

a good cause. As for myself, I don't recognize myself any more when I read the "Daily Worker." (Laughter and applause) Either I have changed so that my wife would scarcely know me, or something has changed.

Now, you will think perhaps that I am exaggerating. Let me therefore refer to Communist sources. The question is what to quote out of the innumerable Communist statements about Socialists, about united fronts, about trade unions, and the rest. Here, for instance, I am quoting from "The Communist," January, 1933. (It is a good paper, Comrade Browder, honest, frank, and it tells you everything.) (Laughter) It says—mind you, this is in January, 1933, remember the date: "Therefore, to beat the enemy, the bourgeoisie, we must direct the main blow against its chief social bulwark, against the chief enemy of Communism in the working class, against Social Democracy, against Social Fascism." There is more of it, but that will do, I am in a hurry.

Here, in August of 1933, I read: "The Workers Ticket is not a form of labor party. We must be very careful to closely examine every one of these applications of the idea of a Workers Ticket and make sure that the comrades are not using it as a way of stopping the fight against the Labor Party idea. We want no peace with the Labor Party idea." August, 1933.

And here a few words about the united front: "The United Front is not the peace pact with reformists. The United Front is a message of struggle against the reformists, against the Social Fascists for the possession of the masses," and so on. Then they talk a little about the Mus-teites, and they say (have you forgotten them?), "Precisely why we refuse the united front with them is because we must take their followers away from them."

And here, in February, 1934, after Hitler was in power, after his tyranny was well begun, I read, "Social Democrats continue to play the role of the main social prop of the bourgeoisie also in the countries of open fascist dictatorship." That was in 1934.

And here in Comrade Browder's excellent report to the Communist Party at its eighth convention, I read something that interests me: "A united front with Norman Thomas and his leaders to develop strike struggles with the workers would be immediately wrecked by the statement of Norman

Thomas, 'Now is not the time to strike, etc.' That means that unity must be built up not with these leaders, but against them." That is at the eighth convention, which was held April 2nd to 8th, 1934, long after Hitler was in power. Molotoff in 1930 said that the "essence of the tactics of class against class consists in the rejection of all alliances with Social Democracy."

Why do I read this? Simply because we shall not make progress in the future unless we realize that the past cannot be simply ignored. We cannot declare a complete moratorium upon it. (Applause.)

I have here also a copy of Comrade Browder's good book, and again I recommend it to you as thoroughly worth studying. It is, I am convinced, an honest and careful attempt to work out the problems before us, but in it I am a little confused. On page 120 the New Deal is well under way and is described as essentially fascist, yet when Comrade Browder came back from Russia, he advised Roosevelt that his enemies were the Fascists!

Just a few lines further on, I read, "Here we have the sharpest example of the role of the Socialist Party in Trade Union bureaucracy, the role of Social Fascists who paved the way for the establishment of Fascist control over the masses." Now, Comrade Browder, I hope I get better year by year, but I have not gotten so much better in so short a time. When did I stop being a social fascist?

But on page 124, I read that "hundreds of our lower organizations still take a certain pride in the fact that they have no contact whatever with the workers of the Socialist Party." This attitude the author rebukes. Anyway, he wanted to do missionary work even at that time to redeem us, and that, I suppose, is hopeful.

I repeat, my friends, it is necessary to understand this past in order to understand the present. But after these quotations were written there came a change of line. Those of you who have followed the enormously important proceedings of the last Communist International will probably remember the candor with which the change to a new line was stated. Here, in the proceedings I find—and I shall not take time to read it,—a frank statement that does credit to any party acknowledging certain mistakes, mistakes in Germany, mistakes in other countries. We rejoice that that statement has been made, but we want to know now just

what the new line is. Here we are confused. We are confused by the nature and magnitude of the change, by the far point in the arc to which the pendulum has swung. Much of the change, the change in favor of cooperation, in favor of fair discussion of difficulties—is all to the good. It may mean the difference between life and death for some of us in this hall. Other changes are less praiseworthy.

When Atheists or Protestants turn Catholic, they become more Catholic than the Pope himself. I don't know whether that is what happened to my Communist friends, or whether it is just a maneuver as some of my Socialist friends would have me believe, but, anyhow, there is certainly a change. It appears that Communists now go in for democracy in a big way, all over the country. They are all for democracy now, they are for the united front with everybody they can get. (I quote, for instance, from the New York platform of the Communist Party.) "The hour demands the building of the broadest people's front, uniting workers, farmers, unemployed, professionals, small businessmen, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Socialists, Communists, Democrats, Republicans, a people's front, fighting in the interests of the common people, the working people, and the poor farmers." (Applause.) Yes, it's good to have a people's front. But at what price? Can we afford to encourage the illusion that if you only go out and fight against something a miscellaneous crowd dislikes you win something! Wasn't that just the mistake with which we Socialists were charged: that we were too concerned with class collaboration in defending what we had and not enough concerned with winning something new and vital?

Are your people's fronts to be so inclusive as the invitation I've read? Can you stay a Republican and be in there? How can you have a people's front that will serve the great cause of the emancipation of the workers if it is to include Democrats and Republicans? That interesting Labor Party experiment in the recent San Francisco municipal election did include Democratic clubs and it wrote down its platform, leaving out certain planks so as not to offend possible Democratic supporters. The result was not a striking success.

Here is a leaflet from Pittsburgh, new style Communist propaganda. It has a picture of Joe Louis and I need not describe him to anybody, Warnecke, the baseball player, and in the middle the very attractive picture of Carolyn Hart,

twenty-three year old candidate on the Communist ticket for City Councillor of Pittsburgh, "who packs a mighty wallop." It is interesting, but I wonder what Joe Louis and Warnecke think about this sort of pictorial united front. I know what Communists would have said a little while ago if Socialists had issued such a leaflet.

Is it possible to build so inclusive, so democratic a united front you now propose and still get the results we want in face of the failures we have had? Why not go in the Democratic Party of New York, which is pretty much of a People's Front anyhow, and be done with it?

Oh, there is some answer to what I have said which Comrade Browder may give but not a convincing answer. I have expressed my belief in democracy, a greater belief in the power of democracy, probably than in the last analysis Earl Browder holds, but I don't believe that democracy, certainly not bourgeois democracy, is even temporarily a satisfactory alternative to Fascism or a satisfactory defense against it. We have got to attack, and the alternative is Socialism or Fascism, not democracy or Fascism, as would seem to be the case in the new Communist line. Now we turn to a very important matter near to my heart. It is the matter of war. One of the things I have admired, although I have not always agreed with it in toto, about the Communist Party, ever since the days before it was a definite party, ever since the Zimmerwald Congress, was its opposition to war and its clear insight into the capitalist nature of war. But now, what do I find? Well, let's see the present stand of Russia about Italy. Russia is in the League of Nations. And will I ever forget what the "Daily Worker" used to say about any Socialist who had a good word to say about the League of Nations! Russia, like some of the other League nations, is selling oil, and other of its raw materials, to Mussolini for war.

Clarence Streit, in a dispatch from Geneva, says: "The movement against extending the raw materials embargo against Italy to include oil, coal and steel, gained force today in the weight of mounting United States responsibility in the matter, urged by Russia and Roumania, who are Italy's chief suppliers of oil. They led in informing Geneva this afternoon that they were ready to make this extension whenever all the other producers, League of Nations mem-

bers and non-members, did the same." Is that the stand of a Socialist State in the making, that they have to wait for the rest of the capitalist countries to do something good, and they will follow? That it is all right to make money out of the slaughter of men as long as other nations do the same? That is not the way I learned Socialism and opposition to war.

I know the dangers that beset Communist Russia, and I know why Stalin has to take advantage of capitalist imperialist strife between nations. But when the Soviet Republic made a military pact with that dishonest broker, Laval of France, something happened which seriously compromised the old Communist position. Worse followed. Stalin gave out a statement which says: "M. Stalin understands and fully approves the national defense policy of France in keeping her armed forces on a level required for security." In other words, we have an endorsement of an army which in bourgeois France is still a probable source of Fascist trouble, an endorsement of an army under a Premier who even now is probably double-crossing Russia! That is the kind of thing that troubles Socialists, that attitude on Italy, that attitude of the endorsement of military preparations in bourgeois countries.

We are told that the reason for it is that it is all important to defend the Soviet Republic. For instance, Harry Pollitt, writing in the English "Labor Monthly," says, "When the war situation arises again, then the defense of the Soviet Union will become the chief permanent consideration of every working man and woman in a capitalist country. (Applause.) I don't want to be misunderstood. I want the defense of Russia, but I say as solemnly as I know how, when the defense of Russia is the chief consideration of workers in every country, you are not going to defend Russia, or the best in Russia. You are too much on the defensive. The chief consideration is to organize the workers against capitalism, against Fascism, against war, for world wide socialism.

I know that there are some distinctions that Comrade Browder will probably want to make. In 1914 there was no Soviet country, but British Socialists thought they had to defend something precious against imperialism, and German Socialists thought they had to defend something precious against Czarism. We have tried the way of war to make

the world safe for democracy as against imperialism. Must we try it again with slightly different verbal dressings to make the world safe against Fascism? Since when have Marxists learned the doctrine of the State so as to believe that workers in minority parties can turn capitalistic armies into red armies before those armies have been defeated as in Czarist Russia? That is what must be considered very carefully. It imperils the great contribution which the Communists have made in the understanding of the fundamental nature of war as the evil product not simply of fascism but of capitalist-nationalism.

The time allotted me is nearly up and I have not by any means said all the things I should like to say, nor for that matter, quoted all I might want to quote, but it would not be fair to sit down unless I spoke specifically on the question that so concerns so many of us, namely, the question of the united front. (Applause.) Any man who is not a fool wants the maximum of joint action, not only for Socialists and Communists, but for everyone. We want the maximum of joint action, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, Communists, to see to it that we bring home to the German people the lesson we ought to bring home, by stopping the Olympic Games in Berlin. That is a united front we can agree on. (Applause)

We have had a fairly successful united front lately in the matter of Angelo Herndon, condemned to the living hell (applause) of a chain gang in Georgia for no offense except for daring to organize the unemployed. Who of us is free while he faces that fate?

If we cannot get a new committee under a new arrangement for the defense of the Scottsboro boys, I don't think it will be the Socialists who will block it. I am afraid that the trouble will lie elsewhere, and it won't lie in the Communist Party either.

These are practical things. It may sometime be practical here to negotiate a general united front. It has been practical in France. (Applause.) It has been practicable in France because there Socialists and Communists combined are powerful enough almost by themselves to stop fascism. It has been practicable in France because Stalin needed such a front if he were going to risk a military alliance of any sort with capitalist France.

I would like more freedom of fair minded criticism in the people's front, and it troubles me a little to see our Communist friends make more love to Herriot than to Leon Blum. They are jumping a little too far to the right when they prefer progressives to Socialists.

Our situation is different. Our task is to win the workers. Can we do it better if we spend our time trying to negotiate a hypothetical united front agreement? Should we not see first just what kind of a united front is wanted by our Communist friends, whether it is the version of November 1935, or the version of November 1933? And there is a large difference between them. We are warranted in asking that those of you who are realists, who want not a formal thing, who want not some victory to talk about, but who want real achievement in America, will prove good faith by specific agreements on specific and vital issues. There are differences between us, differences in our estimate of some values, differences in the road that we would take. There are important differences now upon the terms on which a Labor Party ought to be built and how far we can go in a general inclusiveness.

I for one like to see you Communists reach out hands to the masses who follow Father Divine, but you have not convinced me that when you who are foes of religion, you, who most of you are convinced atheists, make common cause with God for that is what Father Divine says he is—that you advance that understanding with colored workers, which you must have, if they are not to be taken away from you by some demagogue or some incipient fascist.

There are differences, and important differences, for us to thresh out by discussion and experience carried on in good faith. There are important things for us to learn, which, as yet neither of us, Communists or Socialists, have learned, namely, the way to persuade men who now think they are of the middle class, that their hope is the hope of a reward as workers; to teach the farmers of America that the way out, the way of abundance, is the way of Socialism. I don't think we will do it best if we spend too much time talking about formulas and too little time working at the job that cries out to be done. Let's work at that job, differing where we must, stating our differences frankly and fairly, avoiding scurrilous abuse of one another. Let's work at the job as men who haven't many years at hand. Let's work at the

job of making America Socialist, before war or some new clash will give rise to that new American fascism which I fear will be more brutal even than Europe knows.

It is a man-sized job. I rejoice that after tonight we ought not have to divert so much energy into bitter war with each other, but I don't think that the time has come for a formal united front, and I know that all differences have not been erased between us. Let's go ahead and make the party win which will best bring to earth plenty and freedom and peace to men. Let's go ahead and make the party win which best knows how to bring a fellowship of free men, a society not of weak, though possibly well fed serfs, under a bureaucracy but a society of men who know how to settle with each other their difficulties, who know how to be tolerant of differences of opinion, provided we can get cooperation in harnessing machinery for life and abundance, and not for destruction and death. (Applause and cheering).

Chairman Krzycki: You have just heard Norman Thomas who is generally accepted as the spokesman for the Socialist Party of the United States.

The Communists likewise, in looking over their field of spokesmen, men who are well informed on this subject before us, saw fit to draft for this occasion their outstanding figure, Comrade Earl Browder, the General Secretary of the Communist Party. (Applause and cheering).

The audience arose and applauded.

OPENING SPEECH OF EARL BROWDER

EARL BROWDER: Comrade Chairman, Comrades and Friends, Comrade Thomas is indeed correct when he says it is a big step forward that this debate could be held, but it is a big step only from the point of view of the past. It is a small step from the point of view of what we need, that is, in spite of all disagreements, to establish a real united front between the Socialists and the Communists. (Applause). This is what the American working class needs. This is what we are fighting for. This is what we will continue to fight for, despite all points of disagreement which still remain.

Comrade Thomas spoke about sincerity and good faith. Well, we are sure that fascism sincerely wants to crush the working class in the United States. We can discuss for ten years about sincerity and not progress so far as we would in six months of serious united front work. (Applause). A few weeks of united effort to save Angelo Herndon has done more to prove sincerity than years of argument could have done. That is what the experience of the Italian Communist Party and Socialist Party and French Socialists and Communists was. Joint work will quickly remove anything that is personal, prejudiced and a hang-over of the past political fight between the two parties.

We have tonight already been given enough ground to prove the possibility to build now such a united front. Comrade Thomas declares that we have a common enemy. Well, against that common enemy, a common fight. That means united front. Comrade Thomas declares that we have the common task of winning the American working class to Socialism. From this follows the united front to win the American working class for Socialism. He opposes the red-baiters in the American Federation of Labor and in the Socialist Party, because he believes it is damaging to the American working class. Very well, let's fight together against this fascist poison, which, if it succeeds will hang all the Reds, among whom will be not only Foster and Browder, but also Norman Thomas, whether he calls himself a Red or not. (Applause). And we are afraid they wouldn't even spare Jim Oneal. (Laughter).

Why is the United Front the central, all-dominating question today in the United States and throughout the world? Because of the danger of fascism and war. Comrades, I must say that I missed in the presentation of the spokesman for the Socialist Party a deep feeling of the urgency of the situation. He seems to feel that we have plenty of time. But this is not true, comrades. Time presses. Comrades, fascism is coming in America if we do not unite to prevent its coming. Reaction is making headway. The Liberty League, backed by the Morgan-duPont interests, are doing their utmost to bring fascism into this country. Even today, under the Roosevelt administration, striking miners and sharecroppers are murdered in the South, longshoremen are slugged and killed wherever they attempt to strike for the improvement of their conditions. The open-shoppers are

mobilizing all their forces to prevent the organization of the unorganized and the functioning of the trade unions as organs of collective bargaining. Civil liberties are being denied even today to the workers and toiling masses generally wherever these are making an attempt to utilize their rights for the improvement of their conditions. This is under Roosevelt. But Roosevelt's right opponents, the Liberty League, the Hearsts, the Coughlins, etc., want to make this the system of capitalist rule—a system of murder, destruction of all workers' organizations, Hitler concentration camps, for anyone who raises his voice against oppression. They want the system of fascism.

Is the danger real? No one here will dare to deny it. And yet there is still great division in the camp of those who must fight against this menace. Why don't we unite our forces to combat these dangers? Are we going to wait until fascism is actually victorious in the United States?

Yes, there are serious differences between Socialists and Communists. These differences are the differences between revolutionary Socialism, that is, Communism, and reformist Socialism, which is based on class collaboration. I am going to discuss these differences with the view of showing that despite differences, we can unite our forces.

In the past, we Communists have directed against Comrade Thomas much of the fire of our criticism of reformist policies. That was inevitable. We are pleased to be able to say, however, that the situation is changing. Comrade Thomas has said, as reported in the New York Times of November 18th, that he will no longer act as a "show window" for the Old Guard who betray Socialism. (Applause).

What is our fundamental point of agreement? It is that we both want to abolish capitalism, we both seek to establish Socialism.

We disagree on the question of the road to Socialism. The traditional Socialist Party conception is that Socialism will be reached through bourgeois democracy; that it will come painlessly without upheaval, step by step. As against this reformist conception, there is the conception of the Communist Party, which says that Socialism can come only through the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power (applause), the political form of transition from capitalism to Socialism, which alone gives democracy to the overwhelming majority of the toilers, and is a dictatorship against the

monopolies, bankers and other capitalist racketeers. (Applause).

What is the basic thing to be said of this fundamental difference between revolutionary Socialism—that is, Communism—and reformism? It is this: Learn from experience. The working class of Germany, in its majority had followed the road of reformism. German Social-Democracy was the party of the majority of the German working class; what was the result? The defeat of the working class revolution in 1918, and then the victory of fascism. That is an indisputable fact.

The working class and the toilers of Russia, the former empire of the Czars and bulwark of world reaction, have followed the Bolsheviks. What was the result? The victory of the Socialist Revolution, the establishment of Soviet power, the building of Socialism, and—the final and irrevocable victory of Socialism on one-sixth of the earth, the creation of a bulwark of progress, a fortress of peace, a fortress of Socialism.

Comrades, these two historic facts give the answer to the question as to who is right on the fundamental issue of revolutionary Socialism—that is Communism—or reformism.

I must answer the accusation made here that the German Communists were responsible for the victory of fascism. The chief fault of the German Communists was precisely that they had not won the majority of the workers. If the German working class had followed the policies of the German Communists in 1918 and the Austrian working class had not followed Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler, Europe and the whole world would have another face today. Not fascism would be triumphant in Germany and Austria, but Socialism. If anyone wants to speak about history, it is German and Austrian reformism that is responsible for the defeat of the revolution in Europe. It is exactly because the Russian working class did not follow the Russian reformists that today it is a Socialist country, as our militant Socialist friends admit, and not a fascist Russia.

Permit me to cite one example closer home. Imagine for one moment the Old Guard in the United States about whom Comrade Thomas is quoted in the New York Times as saying that they are behaving like Hitler, imagine them in command of police, of guns, of the powerful apparatus

of the capitalist state. How they would crush the revolutionary workers, including militant Socialists! With whom would they unite? Would they unite with the Communists and the militant Socialists to fight against the capitalists? Or with the Hearsts, with all the red-baiters against the militant working class? If you want to understand the defeat of the German working class, study the politics of the Old Guard in New York City. (Applause). The fact that these leaders of German Socialism who followed this course themselves by their own deeds, became the victims of the bloody Hitler regime does not in the least remove their responsibility, and should be a lesson to every honest Socialist and also to the Old Guard. German Social-Democracy distinguished itself in 1933, not by fighting to preserve bourgeois democratic liberties, but by betraying them and surrendering to Hitler. But, aside from these lessons, there are burning questions of the day: The need for all decent people to unite for American withdrawal from the Olympic Games until they are transferred from Germany; (applause) further, to fight for the freedom of Thaelmann, Ossietzky, and the thousands of prisoners of Hitler fascism, these thousands of Socialists, Communists, liberals, churchmen who need our help. Why not a united front now on these immediate issues? (Applause)

Even on this most fundamental question of division between us, however, many militants seem to stand no longer uncompromisingly on the reformist theory. My opponent has some doubts, in common with many Socialists. We might add, the more serious the Socialists, the bigger the doubts. (Laughter) These doubts are growing stronger, in view of events in Europe and the rise of the fascist menace in the United States. I quote Comrade Thomas: "But to press this principle into the demand that Socialists must swear that they can never conceive of any circumstances that will justify armed insurrection, or to compel Socialists to affirm a blind belief in a romantic parliamentarism, is complete and un-Socialist folly. What we have to do in the future will be determined far more by events than by a fine-spun theoretical speculation or dogmatic affirmation." (Applause)

Every drama must have its comic relief. This has been

furnished for this debate by the fear of my respected opponent that the Seventh World Congress has swung too far to the right. He is himself only making his first excursions in revolutionary Socialist policy. Like all beginners in this field, he falls under the influence of high-sounding phrases, in the style of Trotsky, which only cover the remnants of reformist ideas. It is certainly something new in the world when Socialists find obstacles to the united front in a supposed move to the right by Communists. But if our Socialist friends are afraid we will not join them in a future taking over of power when the situation is ripe, let them be at peace on this question. (Laughter) The Seventh World Congress brought forward new tactics and methods of work to meet the changed world situation; it maintained unchanged the principles of the program of Communism. (Applause)

We see that even in the most fundamental difference which still remains, we are not faced any more with an unchanging unbridgeable chasm. Comrade Thomas himself narrowed down this gulf when he abandoned the dogmatic affirmation that never, under any circumstances can the Communist answer to this question be accepted. From our side, we have also narrowed this gulf. We are removing most determinedly all remnants of sectarian attitudes on the question of fighting for the preservation of all bourgeois democratic liberties. Applying the Marxist-Leninist position on the question of bourgeois democracy, the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, speaking through Comrade Dimitroff, said: "We are adherents of Soviet democracy, the democracy of the toilers, the most consistent democracy in the world. But in the capitalist countries we defend and shall continue to defend every inch of bourgeois democratic liberties which are being attacked by fascism and bourgeois reaction, because the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat so dictate." (Applause)

The great mass of American workers are not convinced as yet of the necessity of Socialism about which sincere Socialists and Communists do agree. Especially do the masses tend to remain skeptical about Socialism when they see its adherents sharply divided into Socialist and Communist Parties, unable even to act together for the things they agree on, in the unions, in the daily burning immediate needs of life. They see in New York, for example, where the movement is strongest, the Communist Party advancing only

slowly in elections, while the Socialist Party even falls back to about the level of the Communist Party this year, and the total vote of the two parties is even declining. Of course, we are very glad that the Communist vote is rising. This requires all Socialists to think more seriously about the united front. Nevertheless, we must say that the decline of the total vote of the two working class parties is alarming. Is it not clear that a united front would multiply the attractive power of the Socialist and Communist Parties over the large masses? And is it not clear also that both parties and the cause of Socialism would gain immeasurably among the working classes by a clear decision to establish a united front of the two parties? (Applause)

Yes, we differ on the question of bourgeois democracy or proletarian dictatorship as the road to Socialism. Yet it is clear that for the American working class to face the question of power as an immediate issue in any form, there must be the organization of the millions of unorganized into powerful industrial unions; there must be a radical strengthening of the organized power of the working class, of the working class on the economic field. On this I believe we agree. Why don't we join hands to help the movement for the organization of the unorganized into industrial unions, a movement which is rising today as never before?

It will also be admitted that to hasten the coming of Socialism, it is necessary that the American working class establish its political independence from the capitalist parties. For that there is required today a workers' political party much broader than the Communist or Socialist Parties, but which would necessarily have to include both parties. That is why we propose a Farmer-Labor Party, based on the immediate needs and demands of the toilers, a party which wouldn't be either Socialist or Communist, but which must be neither anti-Socialist nor anti-Communist. It will have to be a party embracing all those who are ready to break with the capitalist parties.

Comrades, let me put the question sharply: Between today and a future victory of fascism in the United States there stands historically only one thing—a powerful people's anti-fascist front, a Farmer-Labor Party. (Applause)

The presidential elections of 1936 are already in full swing. The forces of reaction—the Liberty League, Hearst, Coughlin, et cetera, are working daily with the most power-

ful resources at their command to bring about the victory of unrestrained reaction, the victory of civil war methods of rule against the masses, in the coming presidential elections. Surely the militant Socialists do not take the position that Roosevelt will save us from the danger of fascism. Surely they do not take the position that the present forces of the Socialist and Communist Parties alone are able to save this country from the menace of fascism. Then how can we delay united action for a Farmer-Labor Party?

Why can't we unite on a wide campaign in the trade unions, in the farmers organizations in the middle class organizations, in favor of a Farmer-Labor Party? Why can't we work jointly in these mass organizations to secure their endorsement of organizing a Farmer-Labor Party? Why can't we unite forces to begin building local united committees for the promotion of a Farmer-Labor Party movement? Furthermore, in a large number of localities, and even in some states, the situation is mature for the actual organization of local and state labor parties which from the very outset would rest upon and receive the support of widest masses of toilers. Why don't we do it?

Yes, it is true that the only solid foundation for such a Farmer-Labor Party must have, as its key-stone, a strong trade union movement. On this we agree. Why can we not also agree on joint measures to build such a powerful trade union movement? It is true that the Old Guard of the Socialist Party supports the Green-Woll reactionary leadership, which is an organic part of the capitalist parties. But it is also true that the militant Socialists in the trade unions found it possible and necessary to work with the Communists against the splitting policies of the reactionaries in the trade unions (the Teachers Union, for example), against the reactionaries and racketeers (Nemser) whom the Old Guard is supporting and against red-baiting generally. It is also true that the militant Socialists have found it possible in the Atlantic City Convention to find a common platform with the Communists on all important issues, and through this united action, to play a big part in strengthening the forces of the industrial union bloc, led by Lewis, and in rallying a Labor Party group of over five thousand votes out of 30,000. That historic action of the Socialists and Communists at the A. F. of L. convention, with which Comrade Thomas agrees, demonstrates beyond doubt the possi-

bilities of a united front. It shows that Communists and Socialists were able to find a common understanding in practical trade union work. If such informal beginnings already can give such splendid results, is it not time to bring the united front more systematically in a more organized way into every trade union, to all Socialists and Communists, and through them to the whole working class by formal agreement between the two parties?

Again there is raised the old canard of Communist dual-unionism. Was Comrade Thomas a dual-unionist, as the Old Guard said, when he helped to organize the Progressive Miners of America? Was John L. Lewis a dual-unionist when he helped to organize the Camden ship-building industry? Is William Green correct when he claims that John L. Lewis is disrupting the American labor movement by furthering the cause of industrial unionism? If these things are true, then our friend is correct when he charges us with dual-unionism. But we are sure that he will finally have to admit that all of these accusations are untrue.

I come now to the important question of the struggle for peace and against imperialist war. We agree on the need of fighting for peace. We are in fundamental agreement that the very foundation of the struggle for peace must be the independent action of the workers themselves, drawing with them other sections of the toiling population. From this a large field of practical united front action is opened up.

We agree that we must do all in our power to defeat Mussolini's war against Ethiopia. We agree that we must exert ourselves in order to stop the shipment of all supplies to Italian fascism. Why don't we fight jointly for that? Why do we permit the question of League sanctions, which is a subsidiary and secondary proposition, to interfere with joint actions for aims on which we do agree?

In this struggle collaboration with the Soviet Union is a basic proposition. But we are sorry to say that the latest resolution on war adopted by the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party under the leadership of Comrade Thomas, completely overlooked the Soviet Union. The resolution as a whole was undoubtedly a step to the left of the Old Guard position, and contained some basic points with which we agree. But today in a resolution on peace, to leave out the Soviet Union when only in collaboration with

it can peace forces in every country become effective, is to cut the heart out of that resolution.

We know the position of the Old Guard. The Old Guard slanders the Soviet Union peace policy as "nationalistic," and in this way hopes to be able to incite the masses against the Soviet Union. Clearly, this works for the war mongers and fascists. But what about you, militant Socialists? You certainly want to fight for peace. You certainly want to see the Soviet Union succeed in its building of Socialism. You certainly cannot deny its consistent peace policy. Yet, how can you permit yourself to echo this view of the Old Guard, even though in a different form?

This is the basic question. One cannot fight effectively for peace, who does not align himself with the peace policies of the Soviet Union, and who refuses to utilize the tremendous power for peace of that Socialist country among the masses and in international diplomacy. The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party has officially recognized that the Soviet Union is successfully constructing a Socialist society. Comrade Thomas has agreed to that tonight. That is very good, even though today very short-sighted eyes could not overlook this any longer. That brings us closer to one another. But he who says "A," must say "B." A Socialist country, which needs no colonies, and is against all imperialist oppression, a country that supports all oppressed nationalities, such a country can have no other policy but a peace policy, and its peace policy is a Socialist one. We should rejoice that this policy dominates one of the most powerful countries in the world.

If our opponent attacks bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, there would be nothing wrong. In that respect he could learn a great deal from the leaders of the Soviet Union who really know how to fight bureaucracy. He could even learn something for the fight against the Old Guard. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Stalin, fights successfully against this relic of rotten bourgeois society. But our opponent fights more than bureaucracy when he speaks about "Party dictatorship and bureaucratic government from the top." He evidently doesn't like the dictatorship of the proletariat. He calls it, in the style of the Old Guard, "bureaucratic government from the top." He opposes the leading role of the workers in the Soviet Union, through their Party, as "party

dictatorship." But, without the Soviets, and without the leadership of the Communist Party, the Russian working class would not have been able to build, in spite of a world of enemies and untold difficulties, a Socialist state. If one approves of this Socialism which our opponent also recognizes is growing in the Soviet Union, then he cannot logically repudiate the only policy by which this Socialism could be built. And this necessary policy includes the ruthless suppression of the exploiters, the ruthless suppression of the Kirov assassins, and the counter-revolutionaries, the liquidation of the kulaks as a class, the industrialization of the country, the collectivization of agriculture (applause) —all of which is the economic basis for the future withering away of the State, which Comrade Thomas is in such a hurry to see. Our opponent likes Socialism, which he cannot but see, but he complains about the proletarian dictatorship by which this gigantic historic task was fulfilled. It is a bureaucratic idea that this great task could be brought about without the broadest development of proletarian democracy, involving the broadest masses of workers and peasants as active, conscious builders and fighters for Socialism. To be sure, in the United States many things will be easier than in Russia once we have power, to gain which is harder. That is because we already have a heavy industry; we already have the largest, most highly skilled working class the world has ever seen; we already have a literate working class and a high level of culture; we already have an enormous accumulation of wealth and productive forces, equal to all the rest of the world combined, and we already have the rich experience of the Soviet Union, which will be a powerful ally for us. In such favorable circumstances, we should be able to avoid the long and painful road that the Russian workers had to travel after the revolution, and pass almost overnight to complete Socialism.

But this should only increase the admiration of our Socialist friends and all workers for the Russian working class and their great leaders, Lenin and Stalin, who raised the most backward country from the ruins of war and famine to the heights of Socialism. (Applause). And we may add the politics of the Old Guard, and even the advice of our Socialist friends did not assist very much up to this time.

It is time, I think, that the leaders of the militant Socialists should take a clear position on the question of the defense of the Soviet Union. A situation can develop tomorrow when German and Japanese fascism will proceed to attack the Soviet Union. The longer the united front is delayed, the more acute this danger will become. Will the militant Socialists adopt a position of neutrality? Will they advocate the slogan "Keep America Out of War"? Impossible! Because it is precisely behind these slogans that the reactionaries in America will support the war of Germany and Japan against the Soviet Union with munitions, money, moral support, and everything else. Certainly, the Old Guard, who work with Hearst, have their answer ready: "To hell with the Soviet Union, it doesn't concern us," but certainly the militant Socialists cannot have such an answer. They cannot merely shout "neutrality." They must have a proletarian answer, a Socialist one, the defense of the Soviet Union. (Applause and cheering). Yes, we must be patriots, patriots of the cause of the working class, patriots of Socialism, patriots of the only country of Socialism today. (Applause).

This question of sanctions was placed all out of focus by some people in our past discussions. Some would make it appear as though, like the British Labor Party, we propose to depend on League of Nations sanctions. That is ridiculous. Our main line was again demonstrated the other day by the appeal of the Communist International to the Labor and Socialist International in which we demand independent working class action as against reliance on the League of Nations. But we also say that to refuse, as the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party has done, to demand the League of Nations carry out sanctions is to abandon one of the weapons, even though subsidiary, in the struggle for peace. Our Socialist friends are out of step with the left Socialists of Europe on this question. Our opponent says that only on single narrow issues can we have a united front, until we have brought the two Internationals together. But the Second International throws the issue back and says that a general united front must be decided separately in each country. Out in Kansas we call that "passing the buck." (Laughter). We are again told

that we are dominated too much by Moscow. But Moscow does not hold us back from the united front, like Brussels still holds back Comrade Thomas. The situation becomes even more absurd when we remember that the majority of the Socialist International favors the united front but dares not make a decision for it for fear of the veto power of only five parties.

Our opponent in this debate stands at the head of the overwhelming majority of the Socialists in the United States. They are engaged in a sharp battle with the reactionaries of their own party. This fight is now out in the open and we are not talking about secrets. This can have one of two possible results. If the Old Guard reactionaries can continue to make it appear to the masses as merely another factional fight and another split in an already weakened and divided Socialist movement, then there is grave danger of disintegration and decline of the Socialist Party. We Communists do not want that, because that would mean only more confusion and disunity among the workers. But the militant Socialists have it in their power to bring the second possible result. If they will come forth boldly and energetically with the struggle for the united front, then their party will rally around them with an enthusiasm which will multiply its strength manifold. They will dissipate all pessimism and passivity in their party. They will tap the great reservoir of hope, enthusiasm and energy which I myself have seen among the many Socialists who have been attending my meetings all over the country. This reservoir is awaiting the word of united action to spring forth in a great stream, a stream that will carry us far into the united front, and will strengthen the working class immeasurably. We will be taking a decisive step in preparing the working class to struggle for Socialism. (Applause).

This is the road that will lead toward organic unity between the Communist and Socialist Parties, to the creation of one political party of revolutionary Socialism. (Applause).

We must make at once the first steps on this road, and this is the united front between Socialists and Communists in every union, in the unemployed organizations, in the Congress Against War and Fascism, in the youth movement, among the farmers, among the Negroes, in the unification of the International Workers Order with the Workmen's Circle and the Krankenkasse, among the Labor Defense or-

ganizations—in one word, an organized United Front between Socialists and Communists on all economic, political and cultural fronts in the fight against fascism and war. This is the burning question of the moment. We must not delay any longer. We cannot afford to procrastinate. We must act, because the enemy is acting. We must join hands to rally the workers and their mass organizations and all other toilers for the Farmer-Labor Party, for the people's front against fascism and war.

Everything I have said in this debate I say not as an individual. I speak in the name of my party, with the unanimous and enthusiastic approval of the entire body of membership as expressed in a series of great meetings, and of the entire Central Committee, which has just concluded a meeting attended by 300 leading Party workers from all over the country. Our entire Party is fired by the burning desire to do everything possible, by word and deed, to bring about the united front—such a great united front as has existed for over a year in France, and to build around it an even greater people's front—the Farmer-Labor Party against fascism and war. Reaction and fascism in the United States are mobilizing for attack. Roosevelt is no obstacle against it. The Farmer-Labor Party will be. Let us unite to build it. We are driving toward this goal, and we will reach it.

The united front is possible. It is a life and death necessity of the working class and the toiling masses.

Therefore, my sincere desire, the desire of the Communist Party in this discussion, is not for defeat of Comrade Thomas and the Socialist Party, nor for the victory of myself and the Communist Party. No, we want the victory of the united front, the victory of the joint struggle against fascism and war, and victory of the mass movement for a Farmer-Labor Party in the United States. This is the road that will help all of us to ward off reaction and fascism in this country, to shift the burden of the crisis from the masses to the monopolists, to frustrate the criminal designs of the fascist war makers here and abroad, to prepare the transition to Socialism in the United States. (Applause.)

REBUTTAL BY NORMAN THOMAS

NORMAN THOMAS: Comrade Chairman and Comrades, I happen to know that there are a good many worthy appeals which have been left out tonight, one from the Morrell Packing House strikers, for instance, and a lot of others. It is a serious business when we gather twenty thousand people together and don't have time even to list infringement on civil liberties and other causes in America. Let's remember it and act accordingly.

I am very glad to hear Heywood Broun on the united front. Nobody has worked harder than he for a united front between his own Newspaper Guild and the A. F. of L., and nobody ought to know better than Heywood Broun, that simply wanting a united front won't get it. You have got to get some education about how to go about getting it and Heywood Broun ought to get a united front between the Newspaper Guild and the American Federation of Labor, which I know he has been directing his efforts toward securing, but it requires a certain preliminary of education, and so do some other plans for joint action.

I want very briefly now to attend to a few immediate matters. Earl Browder has had a good deal to say about the Old Guard, and he has rested a little too much on a somewhat extreme interpretation of not too accurate quotations. I honestly do not think our Communist friends can help us very much in this matter. They have lost two wings already. Maybe the wings were small. I don't know, but some of them make quite a noise yet flapping around outside the main body.

It scarcely seems to me they have learned all the secrets of holding together. We Socialists haven't lost as yet so many factional groups. Moreover, I remember it was not so long ago that we were advised in the Daily Worker that "these groups, militant and so forth, though they express a desire for militant struggle in the rank and file, don't differ from the Old Guard on fundamental principles, but merely on the best method of keeping workers from accepting the revolutionary way out of the crisis." That keeps me from thinking that Comrade Browder is the best adviser on the subject of unity within the Socialist Party at the present time (applause); let me call attention to another matter. I don't deserve either credit or discredit for organizing or helping to organize the Progressive Miners. I had nothing to do with it, except that I was in Illinois at one stage of their history and I was sympathetic with certain things

they were then trying to do, things which, I am sorry to say, some of them later forgot themselves. There is a vast difference, I may point out, between the kind of support Lewis, and I also, in my way, gave to the Camden Shipyard strikers, and the kind of support the Communist Party used to give to dual unions. If the A. F. of L. unions are somewhat slow to be interested in a united front, it is not surprising when one remembers some of the disruptive tactics of Communists. I don't want to dwell on the past, but you cannot, no matter how many of you here want it, win the labor unions of America until you have overcome your past.

Thus, at the seventh convention of the Communist Party I find in the proceedings this statement: "The American Federation of Labor is an outright fascist organization." I find in the Communist for February 1932 this statement: "We want to break up the reformist unions, we want to weaken them. We want to disrupt their discipline. We want to wrest the workers from them. We want to break up and destroy the trade union apparatus. Of that there cannot be the slightest doubt." And in the Communist of June 1930: "The task of the Trade Union Unity League is to mobilize the masses, win them to our side and embrace them organizationally within the field and destroy the American Federation of Labor, the most reliable support of American capitalists." You cannot indulge in that kind of talk and change over night, and if you are sincere in wanting the united front of labor, it reasonably requires some outward demonstration of that desire for a longer time than we have had. (Applause).

Something has been said, and well said in the main, about the Negro problem. Let me express my sympathy and admiration for Communist work among Negroes, but when Communists support self-determination in the Black Belt, that is no expression, or ground for, a United Front. That is a thing equally contrary to common sense in America and Socialism. You cannot train people in solidarity of workers and teach self-determination in the Black Belt. It is an attempt to copy a Russian situation that does not exist in America. Here we want an equality of justice, and not segregation in a Black Belt.

I have been told tonight that it was the German Social-Democrats who brought all the woe upon Germany by not following the Communist road, and that the Austrians made a similar mistake. But I would rather be on the side of the Austrian Social-Democrats in their heroic struggle than on the side of some Communists in Germany who yielded without a struggle, having first tried to fish in the muddy waters

of confusion which they stirred up. Alas, the Fascists proved better fishermen.

Even at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, there was a somewhat more realistic account given of what happened in Germany than there was given here tonight. "In Germany it was with still greater delay, even. Only after the advent of Hitler to power was it that the Communists issued the clear slogan of defending the free trade unions, followed by the slogan of restoring the free trade unions. It took a long time before the importance of work in the trade unions was granted by the Communists in other countries." I am quoting an official document on this point. This thing we must remember, if we would understand labor hesitations about a united front.

Now, I turn to matters of a greater importance. It is a little odd to be accused of class collaboration by a representative of a cause which has seen Russia in the League of Nations selling oil regularly to Mussolini. If words mean anything, that is class collaboration, and no talk about international law or League of Nations or what other capitalists do can wipe out the fact that, here, to our profound sorrow, we have Russia doing systematically the thing we thought was not going to be done. Is that class collaboration?

Marching with Father Divine—is that by chance class collaboration?

The inclusion of Democratic Clubs—is that class collaboration by chance?

I am afraid, Comrade Browder, that what is class collaboration for Socialists is great statesmanship for Communists.

Now, let me appeal to you Communists, who make up so large a part of this audience (laughter). By the way, the "Socialist Call" would be less than grateful if it did not thank you for turning out so well, you are doing well by it. But, anyhow, I appeal to you to think a little of something that is happening tonight. You have heard almost in so many words an appeal to the American people that goes like this: "All of you, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Democrats, Republicans, little businessmen, farmers, come with us, let's have a people's front against the oppressor, against the capitalist." All right, well and good. (Applause.) [Wait a minute.] But, then, what? Then you say, "Of course, after we have got the United Front, and we have got power and office, what you have got to expect is what happened in Russia." And what was it that happened in Russia? Well, I am not exaggerating religious persecution nor am I cham-

pioning the cause of the orthodox church that deserved some bitterness of criticism, when I say that there is a little less freedom for the church in Russia than there is in Germany at the present time. (Hisses.) How do you expect to get your Catholics on that basis? All right, hissing proves nothing. I hope I am wrong. Suppose I put it this way: that Catholics think there is a little less freedom of religion for them in Germany than Russia. How are you going to get your Catholics under those circumstances? Do you expect to keep them in ignorance of the matter? How do you expect to get your farmers when all you say is this: "We must have agricultural collectivization, and if our dictator makes it cost a million lives and perhaps more, we nevertheless have ruthlessly to press towards our goal." How will that help your people's front? How will it help your people's front to say, "Yes, when Kirov was assassinated, we had to answer terror by greater terror." Is that justice, is that the justice we held up as the socialist ideal as against capitalistic injustice? Was Russia so weak that Russia could not afford to try men on the basis of their own guilt on specific charges? (Applause.) What kind of security for any future is there if we are to hold that the dictatorial bureaucracy of a party has a right to decide what justice we shall get? Is it true that the dictatorship of the proletariat means workers' democracy when there are scores, hundreds, perhaps thousands of Russian workers guilty of no offense except criticism, who have been put in jail and sent to exile? Is that the dictatorship that we have to have in America? Is that the desirable thing? Are you sure that that is the same thing as the democracy of workers? I am not, and the American people won't be, and if you talk that long enough and loud enough you will give the Fascists their chance in America which will be a very serious thing for all of us. (Applause.)

Was it all false, the story that the Tchernavins told, the story of brutal and senseless persecution of themselves and others? You have to convince the American people either that it is all false or else that you are not going to follow that way. You tell us, Comrade Browder, that you want this united front on the basis of conserving democratic rights. Is Russia still so weak that Russia cannot extend civil liberty now within her own borders, as proof of sincerity to the world? (Applause.)

Asking these questions, I am trying to bring out real and deep differences between Communism and Socialism. Let me see what I would tell the people of America. I would tell them: "We are not romantic parliamentarians. We don't guarantee that you can vote in socialism, but if you will

vote more intelligently, you will be a lot nearer your goal, and the rest will be easier, when your party is backed up by your labor organizations, backed up with your own consumers' organizations. If the time comes when the ruling class forces violence upon us, let us have with us the workers who heretofore have been the tools and the fools of the masters and fought the battle of the masters; then we can make that violence very short indeed." It is not we who emphasize violence or dictatorship, even temporary dictatorship; it is we who emphasize the ideals and the possibility of achieving that ideal. When workers generally unite for a battle with the upper class, the upper class is not very strong nowadays except as they fool the worker, and we want to keep them from fooling the workers that way.

I turn now to the matter of war, which is very important. Comrade Browder says we Socialists didn't refer to the Soviet peace policy in our declaration. Much of that Soviet peace policy has been fine and admirable, and I have praised it, but if we had written a resolution on the troubles in Africa, we should have had to mention Russia's selling of oil and coal and wheat to Mussolini. Better not mention Russia at all in our statement than to bring that in now. (Applause.)

May I say another thing and say it very solemnly? The protection we owe to the great ideals and achievements of Soviet Russia will not be advanced by giving power to the Russian dictatorship, no matter how sincere, to draw us all into war, because it has decided at a given moment that there is nothing else but war. And you can't win your American people, or workers to that way of making peace and democracy safe from harm. What we have to know is the best way to defeat capitalism. What we have to organize is the strength of the workers to impose their own sanctions, and you don't, Comrade Browder, make a very effective appeal for workers' sanctions, when you have trailed along with the League of Nations, with British imperialism, with Britain's navy in the Mediterranean, and with the sale of oil to Mussolini, at the same time. I think our young folks want a nobler challenge than that. I am not arguing the whole question of sanctions tonight. There is no time. Workers' sanctions, we both believe in. We both believe in stopping the sale of oil from America to Italy. We both believe in stopping anybody in America from coining others' blood into their gold, but if you want the secret of the war against war, it is not to be found in defense, not even a defense of Soviet Russia. Do you suppose that automatically, just because Russia is on one side, it will not be imperialism in capi-

talist America which will put it in on that side—if it goes in at all? Do you think that we, while we are still weak, will be strong enough to manipulate our armies so that they are equivalent to the Red Armies? I don't. And I think that holding up that hope obscures the vision of the workers that the road to peace is a steady and relentless struggle against the capitalist system which nourishes war. It is a steady and relentless struggle against imperialism in our land. What I fear is the effect of the sort of thing, which I find in certain quotations, like this, from the "Daily Worker": "We now emphasize our demand that the American government declare itself for the support and mutual assistance pact signed by France, Czecho-Slovakia, and the Soviet Union, open to all powers really desiring and working for peace." (May 20th, I think, was the date.) I don't believe that is the principle on which to win workers to a genuine united front. I am not necessarily condemning in every respect the Franco-Russian pact. I am saying that a very terrible responsibility was taken by Stalin when he specifically told Communists to stop their agitation within the French Army, for that, and that only, was the meaning of his endorsement of French military preparation. It is because this question is so serious, because we don't want to be bound by iron chains to one course, a course determined not by the interest of the workers, not by our knowledge of the meaning of world war, not by our knowledge of capitalism, but solely by a consideration of what the rulers of Soviet Russia demand, that we don't want to go blindfold here in America out of our relative position of freedom into the kind of an agreement that has been proposed. In the long run the course I now urge is better adapted for the defense of that soul of Russian revolution for which Lenin and Stalin stood—yes, and Trotzky, too, whose name has been omitted tonight, than by the course that has been taken by the last Communist Congress. I heard a boo, didn't I, for Trotzky? A united front! And we have to boo Trotzky in spite of what he did in the world. (Applause.) This I say, who am no Trotzkyite, but who believe that if the workers are going to get together into a united front, they must have freedom to admire men who have greatly served their cause, even if at all points they have not agreed with them. Unless we get that kind of tolerance, I don't see that any formal united front will mean much.

There has to be a unity of action to be effective in crisis. In time of emergency there has to be leadership, but leadership is not dictatorship. Dictatorship in a crisis becomes imperative as leadership fails. The more you emphasize dicta-

torship, the greater is the difficulty and the danger, lest men coveting power hang on to power. If in emergencies we have to give virtual dictatorial powers, let it be with the understanding that the workers, not just one part of them, workers with hand and brain, are the real authority. Workers' democracy and ultimately true social democracy is the hope for mankind, that is our hope now and our only hope in America, for to talk up dictatorship and great violence is to invite the Fascists to begin with them first in this country. The 20,000 workers here tonight are not enough to stop Fascist tyranny if we once get the idea of necessary tyranny abroad in the land.

And one last word about this united front. Communist friends, I think you are sincere in your new line. (Applause.) I think it tonight more than ever, but it is a new line, a very new line. When once I opposed the self-determination in the Black Belt, I was accused, I think in the "Daily Worker" as an advocate of lynching, and all over America that was thrown up to me. Once, at a government hearing, I said that although I was opposed to the LaGuardia amendment for confiscation of property in the event of war, because I wanted to socialize property now for peace—nevertheless, I said, in the event of war, I should be for it, that is, for the LaGuardia amendment. What was my surprise to hear all over America—and I have heard it within the last few months—"Mr. Thomas, you said that in the event of war, 'I am for it'." And the people who started that story knew I didn't say it. I have to tell you that you must wipe out this memory in our minds. It does not matter to us so much, but it does matter in winning the confidence of the American labor movement. I hope you will wipe it out by what you have begun to do, by criticizing fairly, by standing shoulder to shoulder wherever you can honestly, in defense of a Herndon, in defense of the liberties and rights of workers. Let us begin that way, and then I will trust to the working of time to bring us to a far surer joint action of all the workers than if we put our pressure now upon a paper agreement first and action afterwards. (Applause.)

REBUTTAL BY EARL BROWDER

EARL BROWDER: Comrades and friends, I think that Comrade Thomas is sincere in his new line. I think so more than ever, after tonight. (Laughter.) However, perhaps he still has a few hang-overs from his past also like he thinks we Communists have. But we don't say that this is in any way an obstacle in developing a united front. We are quite prepared to meet Comrade Thomas in the united front with all the opinions that he has that we think are wrong, and we are ready to trust to the democratic process of the free expression of our differences before the masses, just as we are doing here tonight, to decide the question as to who finally will solve these problems for the masses, those who stand for his conception of the course of revolution, or those who stand for the Communist conception. That is democratic enough, is it not? Even for such a staunch champion of democracy as Comrade Thomas.

I will not be able to give a definite extended answer to all the questions and criticisms that were raised against the Communists. Perhaps to go into all of these questions really would not meet the central line of discussion tonight. For example, would it be of any great value to discuss: should we bring Democratic and Republican clubs into the united front? I am sure that once we really begin the united front, Socialists and Communists would agree everywhere, that workers have to be brought together, even if they are in Republican and Democratic clubs, and if we can bring them into connection with the Farmer-Labor Committees, even before they are fully ready to break with their old parties, we will be more able to bring them in fully by the time election comes around.

Also, perhaps this discussion about the obstacle of the United Front that has been seen in the collaboration in the united front efforts of the Church of Father Divine, is not necessary. Now, we Communists all admit that as between churches, we don't choose good ones and bad ones. (Laughter and applause.) Perhaps in this respect we are a little more impartial than Comrade Thomas. But we know this,

that if we are going to work with churches, and we Communists are quite ready to work with churches, we are very active working with church organizations, if we are going to do it, we think we should give a little special attention even to those churches that represent the most exploited classes who have only this church organization through which to work. (Applause.) So we have no apologies for working with the followers of Father Divine, working with his church organization. We wish there were a lot more churches that would fight for the workers unemployment insurance bill like that church did.

Now, Comrade Thomas, perhaps unintentionally, has given a false impression here about one of the features of our discussion. He gave the impression that the Communists advocate and idealize violence. That is absolutely wrong. (Applause.) Communists do not advocate violence. Communists do not idealize violence. But we say that a responsible leader of the working class must not teach the workers that the capitalists are going to stop voluntarily some day from using violence. (Applause.) The capitalists are not going to hand over their power without a struggle, and the workers must prepare for it. We Communists are not giving forth a new doctrine of the role of force in history. We are merely adapting to modern times the same realistic facing of problems that made the founders of America what they were, men capable of carrying through a revolution. (Applause.) We are good Americans, we are not pacifists, we are not going to try to re-write in the spirit of pacifism the national anthem, the "Star-Spangled Banner," which tells us that the only way to gain and protect liberty may require us to listen to the "bombs bursting in air, that gave proof through the night that the flag is still there." (Applause.) Of course, that good American doctrine is a little antiquated when it speaks of "bombs bursting in air," but the spirit of the thing is just as good. (Applause.) And in saying that let me repeat again, we do not idealize violence. We would avoid violence, and especially, we want the united front to stop the violence of the capital-

ist class being used against the workers in the United States.
(Applause and cheering.)

Comrade Thomas is very much concerned that the Soviet Union did not independently and long ago, by unilateral action, stop the shipments of Soviet oil to Italy, and he places against this the efforts which we are making, and on which we all agree, to stop shipments of oil from the United States to Italy. There is a little difference there. In the United States the only way in which we can do anything to influence practically the international situation with regard to oil and the shipment of all kinds of material, is to organize independent action of the workers, arouse a growing mass movement to bring pressure on our government to force it to take effective action. In the Soviet Union it is not necessary to force the government to take action because that government has no special imperialistic interests of any kind. It is taking on its own initiative all those steps which will most effectively help Ethiopia against Italian Fascism. Let me ask you, are you concerned with practical help or are you merely concerned with face-saving? The Soviet Union could, if it considered face-saving important, protect itself against all such accusations, by just stopping the shipment of oil to Italy and nothing else, but would that be a practical help to Ethiopia; when Italy could get all the oil it wants elsewhere? In contrast with such a face-saving but ineffective action, the Soviet Union took a really helpful course. It found it could do something else. It could use its international position, its growing international power in diplomacy, in the relation between the powers, to force a general cutting off of all oil to Italy. The Soviet Union weighed very carefully the advantages of these two courses; isolation and purity and safety from attack by Comrade Thomas, or to expose themselves to the attacks of Comrade Thomas, but to do something practical for a real embargo, world-wide, against Italy. (Applause.) I think that every serious worker will agree that the Soviet Union is doing the best, and Ethiopia agrees, and they should know.

There are a whole series of other questions that were raised, but I must come to a conclusion, because I went over my time in the first place by six minutes.

One word about the Franco-Soviet Pact. I am sure that after the experience of the past six months, there is no longer any need to answer the arguments that were raised about that pact when it was first announced to the world. You remember we were told then that Stalin had sold the French working class to Laval, and had instructed the French working class to stop opposition to Laval, and then, a few weeks later, came along the municipal elections throughout France and the Socialists and Communists registered a tremendously big increase in votes and consolidated the belt of Red municipalities around Paris. (Applause.) Since that time the united front of Socialists and Communists has been extended to the people's front that includes the Radical-Socialists, the big middle class party of France and the left has been further consolidated, and Fascist forces in France have been further blocked. Is there anybody that can today speak about that Franco-Soviet Pact as having been against the interests of the French masses, the French workers? You may still be able to say it in New York, but nobody would ever dare say that to a meeting of workers in Paris.

The last point. What is happening in the Soviet Union? I am afraid that Comrade Thomas has read so widely, that his taste in reading about the Soviet Union has been so catholic, and his trust in the various "authorities" about the Soviet Union has been so universal, that his opinions about that country are really a maze of contradictions that are hard to unravel. However, I am not hopeless about this; we had similar cases before that turned out all right after a more or less prolonged period. I am thinking, for example, of those founders of Fabian Socialism, Sidney and Beatrice Webb. They believed all those bad things about the Soviet Union too until they went over there and studied the situation for six or eight months and ever since then they have been writing books to show how in the last years of their lives they finally found one country that had learned the real

road to that socialism for which the Webbs had sought in England unsuccessfully because they took the wrong road for reaching it.

I remember also the name of Victor Berger used to represent hostility to the Bolsheviks, to the Soviet revolution, and I remember that in the past year, although Victor Berger is dead, Mrs. Victor Berger has studied the situation in the Soviet Union, has gone over and examined the actual life there and pronounced it good socialism. Nobody can say that this good practical Socialist politician (and that is what she is, in all respect to a fine woman, a good, experienced Socialist politician) allowed the Communists to fool her. No, you can't say that. Perhaps some day Comrade Thomas will follow the path that was blazed already by the Webbs and by Meta Berger with the same good results. (Applause.)

Comrades, let me conclude. In the rebuttal on those questions which I have already touched on, a few typical questions have been raised. I have tried again to approach these questions from the point of view with which we approach the whole debate from the beginning.

Yes, we will face every difference that is between us boldly and frankly. We hope to receive from the Socialists fullest and frankest and most responsible criticism of everything that they conceive to be weaknesses of ours. We will study these things very carefully and we will try to learn from the Socialists just as much as we can. We hope that the militant Socialists are going to take the same kind of an attitude towards our criticism of their position, to learn in discussion. We think that on most of the questions of the road to socialism we have an enormous advantage. The militant Socialists are talking from abstract theory, and we are talking from theory which is being translated into life. (Applause.) But we don't want to exploit that advantage of ours too much. We are ready to place these questions for just exactly what they are worth before the masses. Above all, we say these differences that are between us, which must be discussed, will only be settled for the masses in the

course of considerable discussion and more experience. But, in the meantime, under the threat of Fascism and war, the threat that is immediate and real today, there is demanded not more long discussions as to whether the united front is necessary or not, but immediate steps to begin to organize this united front in action, in every locality and on a national scale, between responsible leaderships, between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. (Applause.)

SUR-REBUTTAL BY NORMAN THOMAS

NORMAN THOMAS: It was a pleasure, and I hope not altogether a wholly selfish pleasure to hear Comrade Browder hoping for a united front by negotiation between responsible leaders. A while ago Socialist leaders were to be outsiders looking in.

Comrade Browder congratulates me on my new line. Well, consistency is not the highest virtue. If it was, I would not think so well of Comrade Browder as I do at the present time, but I might point out that it is harder to quote Thomas against Thomas than Browder against Browder in this debate, and I might point out that I don't need to follow the Webbs or Meta Berger in recognition of the excellent achievements in Russia. I remember when I had a meeting in my house because there was no public hall we could use to urge recognition of Russia. But because I believe some very great and priceless things have been done, I am not obliged to be wholly uncritical. Some one told me of a foreigner who went from New York to Chicago by way of Boston and left the country being sure you had to go to Boston to get from New York to Chicago. I am not sure that in order to get where Russia has got, you have to go by way of Boston. I am not sure we have to repeat all that has happened there. I would be happier if Comrade Browder would answer plainly what I said about Kirov and about the past of agricultural collectivization. I would be happier if Comrade Browder had told us frankly what has happened to Socialists who want a united front in Russia, instead of a party dictatorship.

But that is not the main thing that is on my mind. I want to remind Comrade Browder that working with the

masses in New York does not mean marching with Tammany Hall and working with the masses of colored people doesn't mean tacit recognition of Father Divine's divinity in the march, and that is the effect, if not the purpose of what happened.

I know well enough that my friends the Communists, the intelligent ones, do not advocate an idealized violence. I suppose it is mere neurosis of some sort or other that makes some Communists or near Communists ecstatically applaud whenever great violence is mentioned.

I know very well that in France there has been a growth in the people's front, but I am a little surprised that Comrade Browder should first of all accuse me of thinking too much of the ballot, and then rejoice that they got so many votes in France that they don't need to worry any more about the army, though it is from the army that any fascism may arrive. I don't believe that blessing of Stalin's on the French military establishment was necessary to the pact, not even such a pact as he signed.

I would have been happier tonight, Comrade Browder, if I had not heard that eulogy of the Star-Spangled Banner from you. It was a song written in a wholly unnecessary war. It was a song occasioned by a war that the workers should not have allowed to take place. You said or implied you wanted the bombs to burst where they would do more good than in the air. I don't want them to burst and you don't want them to burst anywhere if we can help it. It is utterly fantastic to talk loosely about violence, now when the government has the means of violence. As long as it can recruit ignorant workers, the less we say now about great violence, and our admiration of "Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light," the better off we are.

And that leads me to one thing more. I would like to address if I could, the Ethiopian dead, the dead young men whom Mussolini dragged out of their homes in Italy to fight in a piratical war. I should like to say to those dead, this: "You, the dead, some of you have fallen because of Italy's use of tanks driven by oil sold by the Soviet

Republic." (Hisses). Wait a minute, those of you in favor of the united front, wait a minute. I say, "You are dead because Soviet Russia as well as the capitalist nations, sold oil, but be of good cheer. You may be dead, but Russia has better purposes in the end. The war will stop. It will stop by common action between Russia and England, which has subverted the League of Nations idealism for its own imperialism. It will be stopped in the end, so be of good cheer. We have made money out of your death, but we have a better way to stop the war than by a Soviet embargo on oil." That, my friends, is not the spirit of revolutionary Socialism. That is not the spirit with which to appeal to the colonial peoples of the world. (Applause.) May I ask you this: do you think that if you cannot meet that argument by anything but boos, that the time is ripe for that united front? I have some doubts myself. But I still have hope, and this is my hope, that beginning tonight, it will be possible for workers in New York, in their unions, and in the city, to discuss problems, to differ on problems, to differ sometimes hotly on problems, but still to differ honestly, to differ fairly, and wherever they can, work together to build unions to defend the liberties we have got, to increase those liberties to win to our cause, which is the cause of freedom, as well as of peace and abundance and to win to our cause those who wander in darkness, the darkness of a disintegrating order, the darkness of the night of approaching fascism.

Let's win them before it is too late. And we can win them by the honesty that has been exemplified tonight.

(The debate was closed at 11:45 o'clock p.m., with the audience singing "The International.")

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