

The Proposed C. P. Changes

By Robert Minor

"Election laws handicap minority parties. Will not the rights of the minority parties be still more handicapped if the Communist Party no longer fights for its place as a minority party?"

We are interested in minority parties only because and when, and to the extent that they affect the building up of a great majority of the population. This follows from the very nature of the labor movement.

At times the question of the rights of minority parties very gravely affect the interests of the masses. In years gone by it was most important to fight for the winning of a place on the ballot for our very small minority party. We are proud of the labor and the sacrifice that were put into that struggle by courageous workers who faced great difficulties, were framed up and imprisoned for gathering signatures to put the Communist Party on the ballot. And we must understand that not a bit of that heroism, hard work and sacrifice was lost. On the contrary, the results have piled up and have infused greater strength into the whole labor movement, making possible many things which would be impossible now if all of that had not been done.

But the issues that were fought out before the public at that time were such that there was no possibility then that we could find ourselves among the majority of the voters on those issues.

That is not the case now. The issue today is the war. The vast majority of the nation stands on the side of the true interests of the country. Today it is a question, not of preserving a little minority on the ballot, fighting for "the rights of the minority parties" marked off separate and apart from a mistaken and misled majority.

History has left behind that situation in which we had an immediate separate concern in setting apart a minority vote in the elections.

Today the supreme task of every patriotic American is to do all we can to bring about the effective consolidation of the vast majority of the people who cast 27,000,000 votes in 1940 and which can and will probably cast somewhat more than that in the Presidential election of 1944.

During the great democratic movement in Europe of 1848, as Fredrick Engels later said, he and Karl Marx "had already been spoiled for the role of preachers in the wilderness; we had studied the utopians too well for that. We had not drafted our problem for that." Marx and Engels saw that the development of the democratic and

republican movement of the people in Europe had created a situation in which "nothing remained for us but to preach Communism in a little provincial sheet and to found a tiny sect instead of a great party of action"—unless they took their place in support of the vast forward movement of the millions.

We do not put it in the same way now, because the situation is naturally not the same. But what we do say is that the role of "preachers in the wilderness" has been given over by history into other hands than ours. History has given over to the American followers of Goebbels, to the Hamilton Fishes, to the Martin Dieses and the German Bund, and to the Trotskyites, the "Peace Now" movement, to Norman Thomas' so-called Socialist Party and the "New Leader" group, the role of criers in the wilderness. Perhaps the Deweys and the Tafts will be found more nearly in the role of "preachers in the wilderness" against the nation's war policy and its victory, than any part of the labor movement will.

To all of the labor movement history has given a different role. It has given to us a role as a part of the great majority of the American people engaged in a holy crusade in support of the military forces and our Commander-in-Chief to see that our country does not slip back into the abyss of ruin.

Everyone who wishes to understand the present situation must see the necessity of making ruthless war against all sectarianism in the labor movement. For, as Marx once said, as soon as the labor movement has reached a certain maturity, all sects become reactionary, although "they represented the infancy of the proletarian movement just as astrology and alchemy represented the infancy of science." A survey of the American scene today shows that indeed every sectarian movement, seeking to remain aloof from the support of the nation's cause in this world-wide struggle, inevitably becomes a tool of the most hideous reaction.

Take the now-existing so-called "minority parties" concretely: Norman Thomas' "negotiated peace" "socialist" party, the Trotskyite group, the Social Democratic Federation, to the extent that they tried to function as political parties. Each of these rotting sects appears more and more clearly each day to be in political agreement with the general anti-war and anti-Roosevelt, anti-Teheran and Soviet-baiting movement of which the Hearst press, the Chicago Tribune and the Daily News have been considered the typical expression. Any claims of these groups cannot be an object of solicitude from the labor movement.

Naturally, we do not refer to the American Labor Party of New York State as in the category of "minority parties" in the sense in which

we speak. Special conditions in New York State, especially the unscrupulous fight against President Roosevelt and against the nation's war policy within the President's own party, has resulted in a special development of the ALP. The ALP is a mass movement of labor and the most progressive forces, not seeking a partisan division of the great mass majority in New York State, but seeking to hold this mass majority together and give it greater cohesion with the majority in the nation as a whole. It does not function as a partisan group seeking to horse-trade its support against the President's concern for the war necessities, but most wholeheartedly to support the President. In short, it is a strengthening of the solidarity of the 27 million majority that voted in the last Presidential election for Mr. Roosevelt. And, secondly, there is not now any problem of election laws handicapping its function. Efforts to transform the ALP into an instrument for sectarian partisan bargaining against the President and the nation's war policy evidently will fail in tomorrow's primary election.

"After outstanding successes in Ohio and New York especially in electing Peter V. Cacchione and Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., to the New York City Council as Communist Party candidates—why should we quit having Communist Party candidates and appearing on the ballot as a party?"

The success in electing Peter V. Cacchione and Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., to the New York City Council and the effectiveness of the Communist Party in influencing the outcome of the elections in Ohio and California—is not the result of having the Communist Party name on the ballot. For the Communist Party has had its name on the ballot at many times and places during the past 20 years without such results. What happened in November 1943 is something new.

What is it that is new? It is that these candidates, were recognized as functioning fully in accord with the effort to consolidate the vast majority in a single camp of the nation's war policy. The many thousands who voted for Cacchione and Davis were voting not for him but against all partisan separation within the mass movement. We would make the biggest mistake if we were to fail to see this and to expect these same voters to support a partisan division of the majority. We have shown that we can elect Communists to public office in the biggest city in the world, and that the Communists can be a powerful force among the people in all electoral struggles. Our present course is due to the strength that we have developed, it is not due to weakness. But it is a strength of the people in the great common cause, and not a separate strength.

Answers to Questions