

The Party Forum

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DEMOCRACY—IT'S AN AMERICAN TRADITION

The American people have a democratic heritage second to none. It is our responsibility to help use and extend this heritage. Our country began at the time of the break-up of feudalism and the rise of bourgeois democracy. Our democracy was continuously enriched by the struggles of the people in our country and by the coming of some of the finest democrats from all parts of the world to our shores — until after the Second World War.

Thomas Jefferson, the Adamsses, Benjamin Franklin, and many other contributed to a philosophy and practice of democracy — based on ownership of farms by the broad masses, and their active participation in the government. They won the Bill of Rights — the Hamiltons and the rich wrote much of our Constitution.

What do we mean by democracy? A belief that every person has some capacity to recognize truth, to make valid social judgments, and to live as a useful part of a group. Lenin said we had faith in the masses — meaning faith in their ability to see what is to their mutual advantage and to be able to organize to get it. This understanding needs to be enriched with the science of Marxism to reach its full creative possibilities or society. Democracy does not imply that all are equal in ability, nor can make identical contributions (nor that there is not a real place for leadership), but that all have some ability, and should have equal opportunity for training and expression.

Democracy means that the broader the sampling one can get of the peo-

Due to vacation schedules and printing complications, we were forced to delay one issue of The Party Forum. We have therefore doubled the size of this issue.

We're all accustomed to a time limit on discussions and abide by it. We have set a word limit on articles and ask our contributors to abide by it. The maximum is 1,000 words. In some cases, the editors have had to cut because the articles have far exceeded the word limit.

Let's have more articles, letters, comments from the membership. We will try to print all material received. Contributions should be sent to The Party Forum, Room 705, 942 Market Street, San Francisco 2, Calif., or transmitted through party organizations.

ple's wisdom, the more nearly right the answer to the problem will be.

It is not possible for full economic, social and political democracy to flower under capitalism — in fact, the 20th Congress shows that it is a long, hard struggle even under socialism. But democracy can be defended and in some areas extended under capitalism. In the workings of our party we can achieve a large measure of democracy, but I think we do not have it now.

In the mass organizations to which we belong I think most of us work to help give democratic expression to the will of the members. But what of the situation in our Party? Do we actually believe that each member has a real and necessary contribution to make in developing Marxism creatively, and carrying it into practice? Or do we believe that top committees alone should study Marxism and use it as a method to propose solutions to our country's problems — at home and abroad? Are we content to half-heart-

edly work on quotas handed down — largely financial ones?

Democracy is both content and form. Was it only the pressure of the cold war which made us give up the election of committees following reports which had been thoroughly discussed? Was it democratic before the Second World War when a list or State committee members was brought in to be voted on unchanged — unless a nomination was made as a substitution? Would it not have been — would it not now be — much more democratic to allow any number of additional nominations to be made from the floor? The whole list then arranged whether alphabetically, or by lot, and the ones with the highest vote elected? The number of votes received even by those elected would reflect the delegates' judgment of their leadership. This would apply equally to county, division, and section committees.

The branch was formerly more democratic than higher bodies, I believe. Actually, democracy is the only way to really release individual initiative and foster group cooperation. Formerly, we did elect the persons whom the members thought most able as chairman, membership director, educational director, and dues secretary. Now, too often, the Section Committee chooses the chairman — which is only proper for a limited time if people who do not know each other are brought together. Perhaps, people who do not know each other should be encouraged to recruit and form groups of people who do know and trust each other, and have a natural basis for meeting socially. This is one of the many ad-

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Party democracy and party structure

(Proposals submitted to California State Board by various members for discussion).

1. Delegated conferences should be convened on a section, regional, city, or county level, to which the clubs elect representatives, to discuss immediate questions facing us in the mass work of the Party, even while the general discussion on the errors of the past period is still going on.
2. The principle of regular conventions, and frequent elected conferences in between, must be established and adhered to.
3. There must be a frequent review of policy, once established after widest discussion, to determine if it has met the test of experience.
4. The party membership must be informed of differing points of view before a policy is decided upon, not just the final conclusion.
5. Leading bodies, at least up to the county level, should be selected by direct representation, not indirect. They should consist of delegated bodies and function as a political assembly, to which the leadership is responsible, to which reports are made to verify policy, rather than to be used to mobilize for carrying out the line.
6. There should be a "Bill of Rights" for the members in the Constitution; guaranteeing the right of dissent; no expulsion except for acts against the party and the working-class; containing not just the right appeal, but automatic appeal, including the right of recall of any leader; co-options to leadership should be eliminated; make it obligatory to hear opinions of lower bodies and members and act on their proposals.
7. The clubs should have greater autonomy in organizing their own agenda; the agenda should be simplified, and contain a "good and welfare" point, where members can raise any question or grievance.
8. Leadership must not be narrowed down to full-timers, but must be broadened to include primarily comrades from industry, trade union, Negro and other mass work and experience.
9. The question of leadership should not wait for conventions, which usually do not have the time to discuss and assess proposals for leadership; the discussions on leadership proposals should be opened up in the clubs, etc., in advance of the conventions.
10. The standard leadership should not just be based on how to bring the line down, but how to bring it up; that is, how to bring up experience from below and properly evaluate it for the formulation of policy.
11. There must not only be a testing of policies based on the experience of the membership, in between conventions, but there must also be some provision by which the members can initiate discussions on possible changes of policy between conventions.
12. In addition to constitutional provisions providing for the election of leadership, there should be local or state by-laws establishing how officers and leading committees should be elected.

Let's deal with today's problems

I have been a member of the Party for the past two years.

My experiences in attending meetings and discussion groups have led me to believe that over-emphasis is being placed on the theory of Marxism as applied some odd number of years gone by, and not enough consideration is being given to the application of said theory to our present-day living conditions and circumstances.

I have been involved in long discussion sessions (I say involved, I mean present) where the tone and level of discussions was so ancient and alien to me that I felt like an outsider. Yet I am continuously asked to attend such groupings.

Feeling like an outsider brings to mind another situation that I feel is of paramount importance to the Party, relative to "practice and policy." In regard to the decline of the Negro membership; I, being a Negro, am greatly concerned with this decline. I therefore make it my business to discuss this with other Negroes that have a historical relationship with the Party, to ascertain why the decline.

I have come up with the following in varied quarters:

1. Absence of a clear-cut understanding of the role of the Party, its real purpose and true aim.
2. The feeling that Negroes do not need the Party; i.e., that Negroes have been progressive in their struggle for social and economic equality all their lives, and that the outfit does not offer substantial and satisfactory enhancement to this struggle.
3. That Negro comrades with a political potential are exploited by the Party by being placed in positions and situations that excel their ability to cope with. My own experiences have proved this factor to be true.

From my personal observation as a community group member, I find it most difficult to realize any real constructive community activity evolving from, or as a result of, our group gatherings. As a whole, it has been my experience that the majority of our time is consumed in discussing either hypothetical situations or situations irrelevant to present-day conditions. I mean by this that I have been unable to feel that our gatherings have been constructive enough so that one might realize a qualitative change in community activity as a result of our being.

From a more objective and less negative point of view, I say that I am greatly in favor of a group such as ours and that I believe that such a group is necessary to the community, and that we, the group, and the community, can benefit by our existence, when we establish ways and means of becoming more active and influential in community activity, the community in which we live.

—J. D. C., Alameda.

Who me? I'm just a rank-and-filer

Like most members of our party I have been reading avidly the articles in the discussion bulletin. I have not only been adding my two cents to every discussion but I have also been listening. This contribution will not be any masterpiece of theoretical value but I do hope the comrades read this and think about themselves.

To place major responsibilities on leadership for errors is perhaps correct for they are supposed to be the most developed; but to place all responsibility on leadership for errors is sheer hokum. I am rank-and-file, I have shirked leadership. I would and have refused leadership appointment, election, or selection. I don't want to be a leader, I'm not alone—there are too many like me in the Party. But even though I am rank-and-file, I too, must assume my personal responsibilities for all errors committed.

- I failed to join and participate actively in a mass organization though leadership has called on me to do this for over nine years. How about you?
- I have failed to study and read consistently so that today I could be in a position to truly evaluate the position

of the American Negro on the national question and the fight for integration. Have you?

- I have not given up my comfortable job to go work in industry with the masses of the working class. Have you?
 - I have failed to study the American scene sufficiently so that I can discuss how a party advocating socialism can adopt itself to the American way. What's your score?
 - Until recently I didn't bother much to think through just what democratic-centralism is. Imagine my surprise to find that actually it is a method very similar to our American democracy where differences on policy and rules can be processed much like a legal case through to the Supreme Court with history in both cases being the corrector of errors. This is true even though people have abused the process.
- These are just a few of my weaknesses and contributions to our Party's weaknesses. From this you might say that I'm at a pretty low level of development. My development could be lower. I study as much or more than

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The USSR—a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions

Many diverse people in different strata of American life come to a belief in socialism for many different reasons. They have, however, this one thing in common: a deep feeling of love for all mankind and a bitter hatred of suffering and injustice.

For this reason, the revelations from the Soviet Union detailing murder, torture and a host of other vile injustices, have deeply shocked many of us who look to that country as a living example of the "emancipation of mankind."

Assuming that there was a "Beria gang" which operated in the fashion of "Murder Incorporated," and assuming that Stalin was too often prone to shout "off with their heads" a fundamental question remains, "How could they have gotten away with it?"

Neither the speeches from the 20th Congress of the CPSU nor the Khrushchev special report on Stalin provide any answer to this question. Here in America, the report by Max Weiss to the National Committee of the CPUS, and the Daily Worker article by Eugene Dennis leave totally unanswered the same question.

It seems to me that some insight into the situation can be gained by viewing the development of the Soviet State in terms of existing Marxist theory.

World War I ushered in revolutionary situations in many countries. In one country, Russia, the revolution was carried to a successful culmination. Thus, the first country to embark on the path to socialism was not, as predicted by earlier Marxist theory, a highly developed capitalist country. The failure of the revolutions in the West, left this backward, poverty stricken, predominantly peasant country to "go it alone" completely encircled by bitter enemies.

And because in the new Soviet State, the productive forces were far from being able to do away with generalized want, an enforced distribution of the sparse production had to be carried out.

The low level of productive forces, together with the aftermath of the war, the intervention, and the famine, created a situation wherein the relations of production in the Soviet Union were for the first time in advance of the productive forces.

This unique situation led Lenin to say, in the trade union dispute with Trotsky and Bukharin, "A workers' state is an abstraction. Actually we have a workers' state with this peculiarity, firstly, that it is not the working class population that predominates in the country, but the peasant population; and secondly, it is a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions."

If Lenin was right in 1921, a question which remains is how did the bureaucratic distortions develop to bureaucracy as a system of rule, which the Soviet leaders now say is what happened.

As a result of the particular conditions described above, a policy of coercion was adopted. Industrialization was forced through at a tempo never before known in history. Collectivization was forced through against the will of a section of the peasantry. A technically skilled working class was developed and educated by means of a gigantic "crash program."

In order to facilitate these developments, a large bureaucracy and a se-

cret police were established. These became instruments used to enforce "bourgeois right," as well as the industrialization and collectivization program.

Leaving aside for the moment, any judgment as to the correctness of the methods used, it must be said that the program succeeded. The productive forces were developed. The Soviet Union weathered the invasion of Hitler's finest, and succeeded in becoming the second greatest industrial power in the world today. Only a superior economic system could have accomplished this against such odds.

But it is my opinion that, having decided upon the course of building socialism, the Soviet state had no choice but to proceed in the manner that it did. The methods used and the tempo established however were not only unnecessary but in the long run tended to impede the socialist development. The possibility of excesses and abuses in such a program had been sharply pointed out by Lenin. The failure to carry out his remedial measures, i.e., effectiveness and instant recall for officials, workers' pay for representatives of the state administration, allowing all to administrate for a time so that none could become bureaucrats, and doing away with a special armed force of the state (secret police) resulted in a snowballing machine of bureaucracy and police terror.

This even "when socialism in our country was fundamentally constructed, when the exploiting classes were generally liquidated," as pointed out by Khrushchev in his special report on Stalin.

After the completion of the collectivization program, the internal repressive features of the state should have begun to "wither away."

Therefore the continuation, and in fact, intensification of the internal repressive features of the state, were far from inevitable. Whereas the dictatorship of the proletariat, the state as an instrument of force, was absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the

Soviet Union, the aberrations of socialist democracy could only weaken the socialist development.

The fact that the repressive measures continued to a heightened degree stemmed from the incorrect policy developed primarily by Stalin and supported, obviously, by the party leadership of the Soviet Union. This was the theory that the capitalist encirclement intensified the need for defense against enemies internally and externally. The need for defense against a hostile world was real. But internal repression does not flow from the external defense needs.

Basing his policy and actions on this theory, Stalin utilized the existence of the secret police and the bureaucracy, which were developed under earlier conditions to force through his "line" and perpetuate his own position. It became increasingly difficult to oppose this position backed up as it was by the police force.

Had there not been the particularly difficult historical conditions present in Russia following the revolution, these tragic errors could not have developed in a socialist state.

But no one should conclude from this fact that the repressions and crimes were therefore inherent in the system itself.

The fact that the objective conditions themselves have been completely altered makes repetition impossible.

An understanding of the particular Russian socialist development should, therefore, not leave us to despair. And we can also take heart in the fact that never again in the history of man will there be a situation parallel to that which existed in Russia in 1917. Socialism now covers one third of the globe, and the economic strength of the socialist world should dispel any fear that history can be turned backwards to capitalism. And above all, the conditions in our own country make it a certainty that we can look forward to a socialist America which will truly fulfill our deepest aspirations.

—Vicki, L. A.

Who says 'third party'?

In discussing Eugene Dennis' report, our group is critical of that part in which he says that agitation for a farmer-labor party is "long overdue."

We look on this as dragged in by the hairs. It weakens Dennis' argument for taking into account the realities of the present situation in our country. If the left now begins agitating for a third party it will be blind to the situation and will become even more isolated.

By what right does the left decide now that the American people must have a third party? Only the future developments can decide this.

Traditionally the American people have had a two-party system. Many times American labor has been maligned because it did not have a party of its own, and various European countries have been cited as examples. We ask, is the formation of a third party at this time or in the immediate future a correct tactic? (We do not feel that it is a policy question.) We don't think so.

Let's take a look at the American scene today. We find the labor movement and its allies trying to find ex-

pression through the Democratic party. They see the Democratic party as their party. And only if they can't find expression through this party will they be ready to form a new alliance. But at present this is not the question of the day.

How do we see the Democratic party? As a capitalistic party, including the Dixiecrats, but not the favored party of big business. Are we to say that this is a static situation? We don't think so. We feel that with labor's merged strength along with its allies—the Negro people, professional, small farmers and middle class — that the Democratic party may be forced to become the real voice of the people, that the Dixiecrats will be forced out, and that Congressmen and Senators sympathetic to labor, civil right legislation and with a program based upon peace can be elected.

Which tactic is correct or realistic—agitation for a third party or to help the majority of the American people find their voice through the party they consider theirs—the Democratic party.

—Clara Zetkin Group, Los Angeles

The test of practice

with a revolutionary situation what would our problems be in our own county and in the various cities within this county? Suppose we had the task of establishing socialist governments in this area. Would some areas lag behind due to uneven development of mass support? What kind of opposition would be encountered and who would organize it? Can the present administrative offices be "taken over," "voted over" with their clerical and

bureaucratic staffs? Or must these agencies be abolished? I am not projecting answers because I do not feel that I know them. I am simply trying to get broad theoretical problems considered in a more down-to-earth fashion.

Perhaps if our discussions and actions were directed to our local scenes we would get faster results in merging theory and practice. Incorrect theories would be revealed more easily.

Democracy—a review badly needed

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vantages had by groups based on place of employment, such as shop groups. In addition, they have some chance to help each other grow daily.

Democracy in the branch implies the ability, experience, and desires of each member — based on acceptance of the general Party Program — go into making a branch plan which helps to form and then to fulfill the national policy. We should have a long-range plan in each branch — and at all levels — concentration on certain goals, including the influencing of a certain section of our working population. I mean a long-range plan in helping to solve what are termed the "immediate needs" of the American people — a plan we work on for a year or several years. I trust our over-all aim is to help bring socialism in a form consistent with our traditions and level of industrial development.

Too often we are jerked from one emergency action to another — like marionettes. This is very unsatisfactory to the individual and unproductive to the group in helping to really influence social change. There are some emergencies which must be met, but a long-range plan would eliminate some of them and give perspective in dealing with others.

Campaigns are necessary, and we must learn how to really carry out campaigns which grow in intensity, but campaigns must not be hung around the neck of the branch until there is no time for discussion of other individual and group work. I think our members always have energy, but it is deadened and not released by continual campaigns from above.

I do not consider building the press and the Party campaigns, but that the latter is an integral part of the growth of our organization, and the former an implement to extend its influence. However, with the low level of understanding of the role of the press in our Party at the present time, we might do better to have a readers' apparatus (including some party members) to get new subs, to renew old ones, and to raise funds monthly. This would be a combination of our former District Manager apparatus, and British Daily Worker plan.

Democracy means the belief that each member wants to make a contribution. It is up to the other members and the leadership to stimulate his or her study of Marxism, and then to help him or her to find the organizational form for what the person sees as important to do.

The branch is the living link by which proposals can be brought to them, and through which the desires of the American people can be reported.

I think we have capacity to democratize our Party, but we must continually check up on what democracy means and cherish its expression. I believe that only a democratic party can educate the American people as to what socialism is, and then help them to work to get it. We have no authority nor force to exert — save the moral force of our example, persuasion, and the magnificent achievements of all of the Socialist countries.

—J. A., Valley, Los Angeles.

The Dennis report projects a Negro-labor-farmer coalition as a pressing need and the correct path forward. To me this seems logical and perfectly correct. But do we accept this as a "bookish" theory or do we see the local reflection of this in our own very real life? What did our most recent political experiences reveal as the present level of development of a coalition? And more important what are the steps that we can take right now to further develop along the lines of a full and conscious coalition?

—L. K., Marin.

'We cut ourselves off from the people'

In more than twenty-five years of continuous work close to important centers of our activities, I have observed centralism operating rigorously in our ranks and often little or no democracy.

There has been very little evidence that either the leadership or the membership seriously looked to the rank and file for guidance or expected to find wisdom among the people. Ideas, plans, instructions nearly always came from the top.

If there has been a single recent important development in our work which arose among the workers at the bottom or among the broad masses of the people, I have not seen it. Not since the great labor movement in the 1930s when the rank and file and the leaders worked together as a well-organized team to win concessions for the veterans and some measure of protection for the unemployed, helped to direct and

carry out the greatest organizing drive in American history, and built a powerful coalition into the New Deal. In that great period we practiced democracy and were a force in advancing government by the people.

We have contradicted our general theory of American democracy as "the rule of the people" in the name of the special theory of democratic centralism. In practice democratic centralism has expressed itself among us as a gross expression of pragmatism operating mechanically as determinism. As usual among Americans we have been in a great hurry to get on with the important jobs before us. As long as we were aiming at the building of a democratic society we have thought it was all right to use the undemocratic methods of centralism, and to short cut democracy, particularly as we were under constant sharp attack.

The consequence of this pragmatic

approach was the gross building up in our ranks of the cult of the individual. A few people decided everything until the rank and file became mere instruments for executing policies worked out at "higher levels." The results have been steady loss of the strength that comes from broad collective thought embodied in a vital program of action. We have cut ourselves off from the wisdom of the people.

What can we do now to correct this basic misdirection in the application of our theory so that we can serve the interests of the working class and the people in building a peaceful and prosperous and secure America?

The time has come for American Marxists to make a new ideological Declaration of Independence. We need not be afraid of the new errors we will make, for they will be our own and we will know how to correct them. "The people have a right to make their own mistakes."

Great opportunities are opening up to advance the welfare of the people throughout the world and here at home in our own country and we must be free to take advantage of them. Two possibilities at least are open to us:

- Make democracy the vital part of democratic centralism.

- Replace our pragmatic mechanically-operated democratic centralism with a dialectic theory of democracy adapted to the needs of our movement and the democratic spirit of our own country and our people.

- Open completely free discussions now on club, county and eventually state and regional levels to find out what the membership thinks should be done to redirect our work positively in this critical period. The leaders should state the problems they see without trying to give the answers. Let the officers listen and learn from the rank and file and let the membership learn from the people.

This process will help to abolish our cult of the individual and develop a reflex of humility in all of us to replace the past and present reflex of "I know it all."

The proposals worked out in these state and regional conventions should then be transmitted to the national center for study, and the development of a program to submit to the membership for discussion, change, rejection or approval.

Whenever possible, interested, honest non-party people should be invited in to consider the problems we face with us and to help us get the thinking of broad sections of the public.

We should limit the discussion of the Dennis report and other top statements. They are an effort to impose thinking upon us from above by those who were responsible for misdirecting our movement. Great injury has been done to the initiative of us all by constant imposition of precisely this character.

To represent the people leaders must know what they are thinking. To assume they know is arrogance. Leaders who understand that the creative power latent all about us among the people

can become the great strength needed to build up our movement will encourage and foster rank and file efforts to grapple with our problems. Now that dogmatism has once again been unmasked as reaction and the flood gates of the people's thinking are open, the possibilities of a qualitative change are within our grasp. Firm belief in the immeasurable talents and power of the people and their productive capacities can open a renaissance here as it has in the Soviet Union since the attack made there upon the cult of the individual.

Establish regular annual meetings of the membership to review the work of the year and to make plans for the ensuing period.

The proposals made at these meetings should be seriously studied by the leaders and replies sent back to the members in the form of organized programs and direct communications for discussion, revision, rejection or approval.

Set up a control body to institute a system of checks and balances with the aim of developing and maintaining free democratic practices in our organization and insuring that every one of us is constantly encouraged to think out solutions for our problems and to bring them forward in fresh, vital programs. Such a body should study the basic democratic principle of unanimity (wrongly called the veto power by our commercial press) which guarantees the rights of the minority within the U. N. and whose operation within the World Peace Council has won respect among peace workers throughout the world.

Organize groups and classes to study the theory and practice of American democracy. The study of United States history is a state requirement in our public schools and colleges. We can add to the censored history taught in these censored schools the knowledge we have of the history of the Negro, Mexican and Jewish people and the great history of our American labor movement. We can infuse ourselves with a working knowledge of our American democratic tradition.

To gain it we must study with all our power and in new ways the great philosophic works of the founding fathers: Jefferson, Franklin, Sam Adams, Thomas Paine, and their talented children — Lowell, Whittier, Bryant, Emerson, Whitman, Douglass, Lincoln, Parrington, Wedemeyer, Debs, John Reed, DuBois, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Marcantonio, among others, as a basis for refreshing our understanding, building new concepts and advancing our democratic way of life. Everyone among us should qualify himself to help in this advance by study of our world-famous democratic tradition.

We have a rich legacy of democracy here in America, but we cannot inherit it unless we break through the walls we have built around ourselves to make our American contribution to the present world-wide movement to freedom and a prosperous happy life.

H. R., San Francisco

Jewish field: For a full review of sectarianism

On the basis of rereading of much of the material available on the Jewish question, (mainly old Political Affairs and Jewish Life), it seems clear that much rethinking and re-examination of our work in that field are required.

This discussion will be limited to a partial examination of certain questions. It should be emphasized that this writer is no "expert" on the Jewish question. This report was undertaken as part of an agreement by several people to open up examination of a number of specific questions in order to stimulate more concrete discussions around the national committee report. An original report, (much too long for this bulletin) was presented to several groups and resulted in considerable discussion. This article will attempt this discussion, but it will be in the main the personal opinions of the writer. Those with disagreements or criticisms are urged to enter the discussions by presenting articles of their own.

For this opening article I would like to deal only with some very general questions. (Further articles will be sent in on certain specific questions).

In reading the available material on work in the Jewish field, it certainly appears that the party was guilty of those errors of political estimate, and the basic error of left-sectarianism to which Eugene Dennis referred in his national committee report. Almost every report and article during this period reflects pretty clearly an overestimate of the imminence of war, at times an almost hysterical presentation of the immediacy of fascism and an implicit expectation of nearing economic crisis, with its attendant radicalization of the working class.

These tendencies found expression in various ways. They were expressed in our methods of characterizing social democracy in the most vicious manner in our approach towards Jewish labor, based on the concept of winning the workers away from their leadership.

Our attitude was shown in our characterizations of almost every sector of Jewish life outside the left as an enemy of one kind or another, in our narrow, leftist slogans, such as "Jewish Anti-Fascist Unity"; in our policies towards organizations where we had influence such as the American Jewish Congress, policies which set forth programs almost identical with that of the party (not to mention our policies towards the 'left' Jewish organizations), and in our emphasis on narrowing and sectarian approaches to Jewish labor through operations like the American Jewish Labor Council.

Another question that stands out clearly is that throughout this period there is little doubt that we considered the main enemy not the bourgeoisie, but social democracy.

I would like to cite a passage from one article which seems to epitomize

much of our weakness of the past period. It is from the pamphlet "To Secure Jewish Rights — The Communist Position" by Alexander Bittleman. One section of the pamphlet deals with the attitudes of Rabbi Stephen Wise, Jacob Potofsky, and Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver towards the Marshall Plan.

The article indicates that there is disagreement among them over the Marshall Plan, that Silver and Potofsky, who are Democrats, support the plan, while Wise, who is a republican, opposes it.

After pointing that support of neither the Republicans of the Democrats was in the interests of American Jewry, the pamphlet says "Such Jewish leaders as Wise and Silver, as well as Jewish labor leaders like Potofsky, could make their greatest contribution to the Jewish people and to America by joining with the consistently progressive, left-wing and Communist forces of our people in the building of the anti-imperialist and democratic camp of America."

This gem has everything in it: sectarian language, sectarian politics, sectarian tactics, etc! And it is certainly divorced from reality.

Just scratching the surface one can see the need for examination of:

- Policy towards the American Jewish Congress. Did the split and expulsions have to take place?

- Policies and tactics around the whole IWO and JPFO question. Could there have been a different resolution of the problems? Were the struggles around the expulsions from the Jewish community councils handled properly?

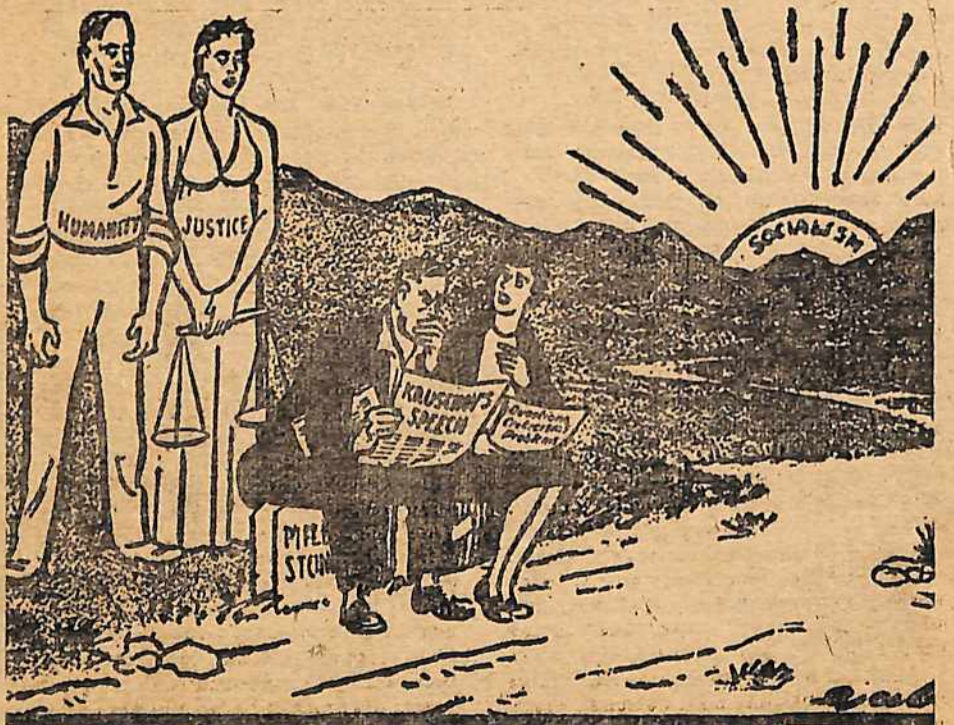
It would seem a must that we review our labor policies in the Jewish field. Special consideration here should be the boycott of the Jewish work by Jewish Communist trade unionists.

Have we automatically and mechanically equated the experiences of the Jews under Hitler with our approaches towards incipient American fascism?

Some have said that the approach taken in this article is too negative, and that it fails to deal with the objective condition which led to our isolation. Although I agree that a rounded estimate will ultimately be required, it is my firm opinion that for now our main task is to single out those weaknesses and those factors which we could have controlled. There is too much evidence that at many times and in many places even within a bad objective situation good work was done, good relationships built and maintained where more flexible, less narrow approaches were utilized.

It is my proposal that clubs involved in Jewish work, commissions, caucuses of members of organizations and caucuses of people in various fields should begin to get together and discuss some of the specific questions referred to above.

—Steve Brand, Los Angeles



"Whatever road we take, we must never leave them behind."

PARTY DEMOCRACY NEEDS AN OVERHAUL

Party democracy has become the central topic of the current discussions — and there is good reason for this.

Broad democracy is indispensable to the development of correct policies and the rapid correction of mistakes. Sound policies flow from accurate knowledge of objective reality. Such knowledge reaches the Party and its leadership through the experience of the membership in shops, industries, communities and people's organizations. The policy arrived at is thus based on facts and must be tested in life. If it fails to meet the test, a new look has to be taken and changes made.

Hence, channels for communication from membership to leadership must be wide open at all times. There is no other scientific method of determining or testing Party policies.

To discuss organizational principles, practices and Party structure first is to put the cart before the horse. They cannot be dreamed up and superimposed without reference to politics, for organization is the instrument through which political policy is developed and applied. Politics, the content of Party work, take priority.

One important aspect of this problem, in my opinion, is the charting of a political course based on realities. This includes an estimation of the capacity of the Party — its size, composition, influence, political relationships and status.

Battered by fierce attacks and reeling from some self-inflicted blows, the Party today just ain't what it used to be.

Yet there has been no change in the scope and magnitude of tasks projected as if our strength was the same as it was 10 years ago. Political objectives, goals and quotas are often unrealistic and impossible to achieve. Policies and campaigns are advanced on every issue great or small whether or not we are in a position to do anything about it. And what is the result?

Leading bodies at all levels are furiously preoccupied working out ambitious plans and ways to transmit them. They become experts in inner-Party

administration, and very little else. The crushing weight of all this finally descends upon the back of the club. Club members find much of what comes down has little relationship to the problems they face. Nonetheless, they have to struggle with it — and this effectively blocks consideration of a program for mass work in organizations and communities where they have ties.

The character and quantity of demands and tempo of work required by the Party virtually precludes examination of policy, even if it were submitted for discussion and review. The real foundation for Party democracy is seriously damaged.

Drastic changes are needed to get over this hump.

The demands of the Party should be simplified and trimmed down to size, campaigns and tasks tailored to our present capacity. The membership should have more freedom and initiative to apply political policies in mass work without endless discussions and plans being worked out in higher Party bodies. This would help eliminate much of the sterile, administrative inner-Party life of which both membership and leadership are now prisoners.

Within such a framework, expansion of Party democracy can be tackled more realistically.

I do not believe there is anything sacred about organizational principles. They are a means to an end, and if necessary should be altered to serve that end. At the same time, a distinction should be made between the organizational principles we profess and the practices we follow.

An examination of constitutions of some 25 unions and community organizations reveals that their organizational principles are not so different from Party principles. The election of leading bodies, reports to the membership, and majority rule are generally accepted. Acceptance by lower bodies of decisions of higher bodies is found in every type of organization.

Our Party principles are essentially democratic. They imply that leadership is elected by, derives its authority from,

and is responsible to the membership.

Obviously, something is lacking—because there has been little relationship between these organizational principles and the functioning of the Party.

Leadership has been increasingly chosen by cooption, not election. Reports to the membership were a rarity between conventions and conventions were few and far between. Majority rule was transformed into the so-called principle of monolithic unity. Leading bodies disregarded the source of their authority — the membership. Dissent at any level was unheard of; if it occurred, it was sealed within the body where it took place.

All this resulted in rigid enforcement of decisions by higher bodies on lower bodies and the membership regardless of how decisions were reached or whether they met the needs of practice.

The "something" that was lacking was failure to implement the democratic principles we professed. Procedures for guaranteeing them were neither spelled out nor written into the Party Constitution, even after the Browder period.

Article IV, Section 1 of the Constitution proclaims the right of members to take part in policy-making and in election of officers, leading committees and delegates. But nowhere is there provision for exercising these rights except in pre-convention periods. And a lot of water does flow under the bridge between Conventions.

Article IV, Section 5, states again that members shall be involved in determining major policies, with the right and duty to examine their execution, in accord with Article VII, Section 7. Does Article VII, Section 7, then, define procedures by which these rights can be exercised? Not at all. It defines the authority of the National Committee, without any reference whatsoever to the right of members. It's a "heads I win, tails you lose" proposition.

It is obviously inadequate merely to affirm democratic principles and leave their implementation to the good graces of leading committees.

In my opinion, the Party Constitu-

tion should specifically include the following:

1. The right of membership to be informed of different views expressed in leading bodies on all major questions; and to know the positions of individual members of leading committees on major questions.
2. Provisions for calling delegated conferences at regular intervals between conventions on a county, state and national level, to re-evaluate policy or develop a position on new issues which arise.
3. The right of lower bodies to examine decisions of higher bodies, and, if they find them incorrect or inadequate, to request their review and amendment.
4. Direct election of county, state or national officers by convention delegates.
5. Provisions for removing members of leading bodies by delegated conferences; provision for filling all vacancies on leading bodies, between conventions, by delegated conferences.
6. Authorization to state and county organizations to establish by-laws to the Constitution, regularize procedures to meet the varying needs of local organizations. Such by-laws should not conflict with the Constitution itself.
7. Charges against individuals should be handled by elected trial committees. Trial committees should hear charges, make recommendations for action to the body which elected them, and then disband.

The habits and methods of many years do not shake off easily. Certainly the present leadership cannot remain unchanged. But overhauling the Party program and democratizing its structure should help produce a new type of leadership. Less superstructure, fewer full timers, and leading committees heavily based on mass workers should emerge. Both new forces in leadership and old ones who may be "reconditioned" will function differently in an organization with clearly defined procedures and constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights for the membership.

OLETA YATES, S. F.

For a 'new look' at organizational structure

In discussing the question of democratizing our party certain questions have come to the fore: for example, the requirements for membership in the party are that one agree with its general program and objectives, participate in helping to achieve these, and pay dues regularly. However, in practice, the atmosphere is such that a member who is unwilling or unable to carry out a pretty full measure of all policies and projects is made to feel that he or she is not a good party member, is "undisciplined" etc.

Most of us have known people who have said in effect, "I agree with you. I admire all the fine things you do. But I'm not one of those 'heroic, disciplined' people who can go to meetings every night, carry on 16 different activities, etc." Quite a large number of these people have "gone through" the party, many have never come in it at all.

In examining the above question we might take a few lessons from the mass organizations. Let's look at the active membership of most organizations. Why are they active? Because they are convinced of the worthwhile-ness of the organization, because a particular form of activity appeals to them, and because they derive personal satisfactions and fulfillment from these activities. By and large, those who take on major responsibilities in these organizations do so because they feel able and want to take on greater activity and leadership. If they find they have made a mistake, they resign and are replaced — and generally no one thinks worse of them, even if they don't give yards of excuses as to why they are stepping down.

Why do some of us in the party take on the jobs we do, why are some of us more disciplined than others, and how did we get that way? Firstly, because of understanding and conviction,

I don't think that the best and most disciplined of us are that way because of a concept or organizational discipline — it's self-discipline which is dependent upon conviction, not coercion (even if only verbal). But, it is said, we are an organization of action, and if once the line has been adopted, all don't carry it out, we'll no longer be an organization of action. What happens in life? Those who are convinced carry it out to the best of their ability, some of those who are not convinced or do not understand try to carry it out anyway because of "discipline" — but how well can one carry out a policy of which one is not convinced, or perhaps disagrees with — the rest of the members "vote with their feet." What meaning then has discipline, what happens in life to an approach which "demands" unanimity?

It seems to me that an approach which genuinely recognizes the right to differ, at times to abstain, to present and discuss a minority point of view, would advance not only by recognizing reality, but would, by creating an atmosphere for free discussion, actually enhance the possibility of greater genuine unity and understanding. Obviously, in an organization such as ours, maximum unity of action is necessary, and there are emergency situations as well. When a union is on strike, all are required to do things in support of the strike despite the fact that some may not have been in agreement with it. However, we are not on strike all the time. The class struggle goes on, but it takes different forms and is not always in a "crucial" stage.

In examining organization of the party, I think that we must start by discussing what would be the best form of organization for the various areas of work, trade union, legislative, edu-

ational etc. How can our present force be improved or changed so as to become not only better, but centers to which we would feel confidence in bringing new-members.

On the question of organizational forms, we might also benefit from a look at the unions and mass organizations. Most of these carry on their activities by means of: (1) the general membership meeting (usually monthly) (2) the executive board (3) various functional committees to carry on different phases of activity.

Does an industrial or functional mass organizational club have to meet weekly to discuss policy and program as applied to that organization?

Does it require the constant meeting of people in a particular field of work to carry on all phases of party activity, or could they meet for the express purpose of discussing work in their particular field, while meeting with other comrades to discuss other activities?

What about the role of the community clubs in trade union concentration and the role of trade union forces in the life of the community? Would not a grouping, club, meeting on political division basis, such as an AD, CD, or city area, be better able to cope with the problems of the integration of community and trade union work?

I think we should all be brought together in groups (the size of which would be determined by various political considerations) to discuss matters of common interest to all party members, and meet separately for discussion of specific areas of interest and activity with others of like interests. In other words, I would see our entire membership — including our trade union members — divided up on a political area basis, AD, CD or city. This grouping (which for convenience I'll call a club) would meet for the pur-

pose of discussing general party policy and program and for educational discussions. It would provide the means for mobilization around major campaigns, such as, elections. It would also be the place where leadership and membership meet together to thrash things out and educate each other. Because of the diversity of activity and experiences of the club membership, the discussions would be richer and the conclusions would be more likely to reflect the thinking of the party as a whole than in our present functional clubs.

In addition to the above clubs, members would meet in committees or caucuses composed of people engaged in similar activities to discuss and plan the work in their particular field of activity, and would meet as often as the members thought necessary. Members of caucuses would be drawn from the city or region as a whole depending upon the type of mass organization involved, not just from their own area club. Members could belong to more than one committee or caucus depending upon how active they might be.

Party organizational or special activities would be handled on an area basis through the election of committees, which might be year-round or temporary depending on the nature of the activity.

Division of labor would enable the party as a whole to carry on more than one activity at a time without burdening each individual members with all of them. Also, because the committees or caucus, not the club, would be handling activities and drawing members into them, it would give the individual member wider choice as well as lessening the pressure — to say nothing of the fact that people would be doing the work for which they are best suited.

J. V.—East Bay

For a new Marxist organization

I go along with W.E.S. of San Francisco that the present isolated and shrinking Communist party ought to be replaced by a broad Marxist-socialist party. Of course this will be a tremendous task and can't be done over night. Many discussions and clarifications as well as creative thinking are needed to find the means to suit the need of the American masses.

I am sure that a proposal such as this will be a great shock to many members who have spent their lifetime devoted to the Communist cause. To them, perhaps, it will be unthinkable to disband the party and protest that such a discussion in the bulletin will disrupt the morale of the members particularly at present time. Also some will say that this is an easy way out and following in the footsteps of Browder. Still others will say that this is nothing but defeatism and pessimism and what we need is good self-criticism and finding an American way to build a stronger party based on Marxism and Leninism by evaluating our work in the past and correcting our mistakes.

Also some argue that we will never agree with The Guardian and Monthly Review followers and other socialists ideologically and the matter of merging with them is impossible and a waste of time.

Haven't we said some of these things in the past decades? And now we want to repeat the same arguments among ourselves with no new members added to our ranks in the past several years. Let us examine our members today. Most of them are aging "1905ers" and those who came in during the depression years and but a handful of the younger generation who know very little about the bonus march, unemployment and the free speech struggles in this country. We are facing a party without heirs!

The average American today understands somewhat the meaning of democracy but he fears communism. Most of the American people, including the youth, today detest the word "communism" in spite of the fact that we have a rich socialist tradition and heritage in this country.

For many years a great wall has been built between the Communist party and other socialist elements. This wall will not be torn down unless we find a minimum meeting ground. It seems to me that the only way to attract liberals, socialists and the "Communism-fearing" generation would be to form a new broad left-wing Marxist-socialist party completely free from Stalin-type influence and relying mainly on the American socialist tradition.

XZY, Sonoma

More comment from the ranks

(Continued from Page 1)

the average Party member. I try to think through problems and I have presented my thinking and have fought for it on any occasion where I thought I was correct.

I have written this article mainly to try to get us rolling in looking at ourselves. We have not carried through or even digested the program as set up in the American Way. A rereading of this program indicates an attempt to focus our attention on broader horizons and to try and correct our leftism.

But no program in and of itself can do this. We must examine ourselves—each individually. We must stop red-baiting ourselves out of existence. We must learn to be human beings with respect for others. We surely must recognize now that we are not experts in everything—that there are other organizations, even those under bourgeois leadership, where the membership is constantly striving to improve their lives and the lives of their families. There are church groups who have made much greater contributions to peace than our individual clubs or sections. There are national groups who have fought just as diligently and sometimes more effectively than we on immigration legislation. We must learn to respect these individuals and organi-

Socialism belongs first on the agenda—not last

Discussion with many persons in Marin county indicates a general agreement that the centralism in democratic centralism has been emphasized at the expense of the democracy. There has been an atmosphere which discouraged rank and file participation in making decisions. The decisions have been made at the top. It was felt that this autocratic method goes back a long way before the Smith Act arrests of 1948.

Where do these tendencies come from? Some have laid the blame on the importation of "foreign" organizational methods, pointing out that democratic centralism was a phrase first used by Lenin in a historical situation very different from our own.

However, a brief comparison indicates that the Communist party in the United States, and the Communist party in California, operate very much on the pattern of any right wing American trade union. It is not necessary to look abroad for the origins of the Communist party's top heavy centralism. It has borrowed the worst from American labor's organizational methods, rather than the best. Democratic Centralism, sensibly applied would not have produced such results as these.

We feel that definite organizational changes are needed. We should have a redrafting of our constitution. We should live by it. Our state organization should also operate by a set of bylaws known to the membership. There should be regular reports on the activities of the elected leaders and the finances. Powers of the elected leaders to hire staff members should be spelled out and reported upon. State conventions—and national—should be held at regular intervals. The channels of relationship from the member, through the club, section, county and state leadership, should be defined—and adhered to.

The Krushev report is inadequate as an explanation for the events that transpired within the Soviet Union for the past 20 or more years. Historic events cannot be the product of "megalomania". The real sources of the evils revealed by Krushev are still to be shown. What happened in the Soviet Union can be understood only in terms of that country's historic development. This approach is missing from the comments of our own leadership on the Krushev report.

We feel that the Dennis report added very little new to the discussion. While we could not expect answers to all the questions of today, we feel that report failed to serve as a stimulus to discussion. At stake today is the very existence of the Communist Party; the

zations and learn to work in and with them. We must review our attitudes and change an awful lot of habits.

We have become vain and boastful for we are "the vanguard of the workers." Some of us aren't even good workers on the job let alone being a political vanguard.

Our leadership with whatever errors they have made have earned and deserve our respect and thanks for taking on a task that most of us shirk. Too frequently our club and section leaders have been placed there because nobody else would take it. Now let's not beat them over the head for taking on these jobs. Let us also remember that many of our leaders have been imprisoned and many have been away. These people have also faced extreme hardships. Let us not negate their problems while we point out their errors. I have tasted some new leadership in this recent past, and new leadership, however willing, because it is insecure and even less adequately trained has frequently been a lot more bureaucratic than old leadership.

Let us all work together—sharing and recognizing that each of us has responsibility to correct our many weaknesses and to develop ourselves and each other into better people and Marxists.

—rank-and-filer, S.F.

A resolution on democratic centralism

RESOLVED, To re-establish democratic centralism and end the practice of being a monolithic party.

WHEREAS, Democratic centralism means that the policies and program adopted by the majority at each convention shall bind the activity of all members and each is expected to help carry out the majority approved program. It further means that minority views must not be driven out or trampled upon. If we speak of a majority, then it follows that there are minorities.

WHEREAS, A monolithic party does not tolerate minorities within it; with the result that criticism and democracy are stifled—thus defeating the liberating role our party should play.

FURTHER, All that should be required of anyone to be accepted as a member of our party should be:

1. The aspiration for socialism, defined as the collective ownership of the social means of production and distribution.
2. Opposition to all forms of racial and national superiority or oppression in theory and practice.
3. Support the struggles for civil liberties, civil rights and democratic institutions in the U.S.; and the struggles for American contributions toward world peace.
4. Agreement to take part in the life of his or her local party club and to pay dues.

IT IS FURTHER PROPOSED: in order to build into the organizational structure of our party some guarantee of criticism and self criticism and democratic centralism the following changes should be made.

Representation at National Conventions shall be restricted so that no more than 50 percent of the total voting delegates may be members of any committee higher in the party than Division Committees; and further, that no more than 75% may hold office higher than a club office.

It should further be guaranteed that allowance must be made on the staff of the party press and for membership on the National Committee and National Board for representation of important minority trends or views. Appropriate organizational measures should be taken for implementing this.

EASTERN SECTION
NORTHERN DIVISION
Los Angeles

Dennis report does not tackle the errors of the past in a way which would probe through to the real questions which need answering. The particular errors he discusses are not the heart of the matter and have been frequently discussed before.

In speaking of lack of democracy in the Party, Dennis appears to believe that this can be solved merely by a pious wish on the part of leaders and members. But in fact, we feel this will require deep changes in the organization, the habits and methods of work, and the leadership, of the Party.

The Dennis report is to be praised for raising the question of the relationship of the Party to other socialist groupings. The membership has been ahead of the leadership on this question as is indicated by the support for non-Party socialist publications.

The comments in the Dennis report, however, did not indicate the urgency of initiative by the Communist Party to explore common ground with other socialist groups.

We feel that there should be held an immediate emergency conference of persons working on our publications. Our publications are outstanding for their low quality, poor style, lack of readability, repetitiousness, dogmatism, and impervious resistance to the trends and thoughts of the people around us. For the most part, people who do not already agree with us, find our publications unreadable.

Political affairs, as is well known, deserves the highest medal of honor on all these counts. We believe a theoretical organ is needed—but not for Political Affairs. Political Affairs should be abolished, and a new organ, under new editorship, should be set up. Its purpose should be—not to hand down the line of the New York leadership as has been the case with Political Affairs—but to investigate and discuss theoretical problems of Marxism, in a lively, readable, scholarly and intelligent manner. Its aim should be to communicate ideas, not to murder them.

The future role of the Daily Worker, the Peoples World, Masses and Mainstream, should be discussed, and proposals brought back to the readership of these publications.

Following this, a series of conferences should be undertaken with other socialist publications to agree on ways of

cooperation and competition which will be constructive for the whole socialist movement.

The central question facing the American left today is the building of an effective, public voice for socialism. We no longer can afford to pass off the question of socialism by a few vague phrases in favor of the "more immediate" tasks. There are no tasks more immediate for the left than this. In every great area of conflict—labor, politics, foreign relations, and the fight against discrimination—the greatest service which the left can render the rest of the nation lies in creating an effective, public voice and center for socialism.

Is there likely to be a growth in the American Socialist movement? We believe this is very likely. Relaxation of the immediate menace of war makes possible a broadening of horizons. It allows people to stop long enough to think, "where are we going from here"? At the same time, this relaxation confronts our country with a series of economic, social and political problems which quickly begin to appear insoluble within the framework of capitalism.

These questions will be asked (and answered) first among intellectuals, and among the most active and thoughtful members of rank and file and secondary leadership of labor. And if socialism can find an organized base among these groups, then the time will come when it will spread out to become a shaping and determining factor in the development of the entire country.

The weakness and isolation of the Communist Party today is due in our opinion in large part to our virtual abandonment of the question of socialism.

All the errors to which Dennis devotes so much attention in his report could have been committed a hundred times over without seriously weakening the Party—if only we had had the ability to inspire young Americans with an enthusiasm and a sense of direction.

We have failed to develop a long range program. We have lost our identity as a party of socialism. The future existence of the Communist Party, we believe, hangs upon our ability to re-establish this identity. Socialism should be at the head of our agenda—not the rear.

Marin Group
Party Forum 5

Defend labor—and the organizations of labor

The outstanding fact confronting our party today is its isolation from the main currents of the democratic forces and particularly the labor movement. Our party has been under severe attack from the class enemy. Many laws have been used to put our leadership in jail and to make it difficult for us to function as part of the mass movement. It is only necessary to mention the Smith Act, the Taft Hartley Act, the screening of seamen, the use of congressional committees to illegalize our people in industry and in the unions.

Under the guise of fighting our party as "an agent of a foreign power," the blow was also being directed against the labor movement and the very existence of democracy in our country. Our policies in the labor movement should have been directed at all costs toward maintaining and extending our ties against reaction. In other words, we had to use the tactic of rolling with the punches in order to preserve our strength for the next round. The result of our policies was separation from our natural base with the outcome that we played a very minor role in the roll-back of McCarthyism.

We have to critically reexamine our role in the labor movement. In the thirties, in the period of the upsurge of the labor movement and the formation of the CIO, we played an extremely important role in the organization of the unorganized. Our prestige and the prestige of our people was high. We rightfully won the key positions of leadership due to the recognition by the workers of the self sacrificing role played by our membership in organization and struggles against employers. What happened in the intervening years that dissipated this good will and forced us from position after position?

It is true that many new young workers came into industry who hadn't participated in the early struggles and weren't aware of the role played by our people and therefore more easily

fell prey to red baiting. However, this is far from being the main reason for our defeats. We utilized our positions of leadership to raise political and left issues that were far and away beyond the understanding of the membership. Often times that which was characterized as right opportunism on the part of some left trade union leaders was a natural reluctance on their part to raise questions which they knew, on the basis of their daily contact, were not yet acceptable to their members.

Our tactics in the right led unions have been characterized by the practice of directing the main blow against the officialdom. We have called them social democrats, labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, and just plain phonies. We have done so much to transform the union floors into forums for opposing factions, rather than agencies for the discussion of the best means for achieving the economic and political needs of the members. We too often give the impression that our main desire is to achieve power in order to run the union for our own "devious" political interests. We have not taken into account that these trade union leaders, particularly the lower levels of leadership, reflect the thinking of workers, who in their overwhelming majority, are as yet unable to realize that their main enemy is the capitalist system itself and that a socialist society is the fundamental solution to the problems of our nation and class.

Too often our people have gone into the locals raising political slogans and political approaches unconnected with the realities of the situation. The membership look askance at these "advanced elements" and wonder what kind of an angle we have. Usually this preoccupation with political ideas that have not yet been accepted by the people (such as the Third Party, Labor Conference for Peace, etc.), was accompanied by a disregard of those

things that particularly concerned the workers, such as wages, hours, and working conditions.

Our approach to the question of Negro representation in the leadership of the unions — particularly those with large Negro memberships was handled very mechanically.

We have raised this question programmatically with workers we were in contact with. They were not able to understand the theory behind our approach because they faced the practical problems of electing leadership on the basis of available candidates. Our position on Negro leadership becomes much strengthened when, instead of using abstract theory, we help to bring forward and present the candidates who can put the theory into life.

Our fundamental approach within the trade union movement must be the good of our class and labor organizations. This is ABC and must become self evident if we are going to regain and expand our influence in organized labor. Only when the members are convinced that we are not following narrow partisan interests will we gain their respect and willingness to collaborate.

We must accept as a fact that the bulk of the leadership of the trade unions, particularly the secondary leadership, are sincere and to a great extent reflect the level of development and thinking of their membership. This, in spite of all the corrupting influences of pie, because only as long as they at least, partially reflect their members' needs, desires and aspirations can they hold on to office. This means that our approach to them is the approach of friends. Any differences we have are raised in a friendly fashion and from the point of view that we are jointly trying to find the best means of combating a common enemy. In this way, without losing our identity, common ground can be found for directing the strength of the unions against the

monopolies in the political and economic fields. Of course, this means that others opinions are given the same weight as our and that we don't establish as conditions for unity our program in a "take it or leave it" basis. This too often has been the practice in the past.

Our major approach must be, that we, as others, are working for the best interests of the members. We take our class as they are and not as we'd like them to be. Our analyses must take into account the level of development of the mass movement and not be based on wishful thinking. Thus we can win the respect of the membership and help influence their thinking and activity to higher political levels. Thus we can help establish the conditions for developing a broad coalition.

A major factor in guaranteeing a correct approach in the trade union field must be the constant attention of the leading forces of the party. There must be the constant recognition that labor is the key to a democratic and Socialist America, and only as we achieve traction and influence in the working class can we think in terms of influencing the trend and development of the peoples' movement. This fact necessitates a constant interchange of experiences and ideas between the leadership of the party and the rank and file party unionist. In this way can we guarantee that perspectives will be based on reality. It would also be well that considerable portions of our leadership on all levels consist of working class elements with trade union experience so that they can really give guidance and leadership based on practical experience.

To the extent that we break with past practices of left sectarianism will we become a party with roots in the labor movement that can measure up to its historic responsibility of leading our people to Socialism.

G. K.—S.F.

'...but words are actions, too'

There is much talk and discussion about changing this, changing that in our work, but it seems that at least so far the real evidence of the will to change on the part of our leaders, nationally as well as locally, has not gotten to the roots, or at least is not yet in evidence. It is often said that actions speak louder than words, but at certain point "words" are also forms of action.

What we are against is the tone of "authority" with which things are presented. The question that comes to mind is, is this sort of manner of spreading "information" and of working necessary.

Is it necessary for Max Weiss (or the central committee) to say on Civil Liberties literally: "This is the new position?"

Is it necessary for John Gates to "completely" exonerate himself and his total position in his editorial in question? Is there perhaps room for some humility, especially at this time, so that he could admit that at least it might be true that the use of the word "demand" should not have been used by him in referring to the necessity of international criticism — which we feel most of our party agree to?

On another score, we realize there have been discussions of the central committee on important issues, and that it has been customary for the membership only to receive the "final product" without the details of discussion.

We believe this discussion leads to the following conclusions which should be seriously considered:

- That individual leaders must exercise their will-power to change in their way of leading. We believe it is in the tradition of Leninism for them to become more the "questioners" than the "givers" out of the line.
- That it will certainly not be enough to ask only for the above, but that it will be necessary to change the party structure, so that it facilitates on all levels this change of individuals through the manner in which they are expected to carry out their tasks. Individual self-criticism will only help individual cases and only temporarily.

To guarantee the complete reversal of wrong procedure, and the encouragement of the real and new concepts of leadership will require a clear structural definition of how we work as a party.

- That it be agreed that these new ways of working will find certain individuals at fault or inadequate in regard to the exercising of the correct democratic manners of working and that where necessary the changes of personnel must be expected and achieved. That all this be done on as democratic a basis as possible.

- That all this be brought for full discussion to the membership for referendum and adoption, and that subsequently necessary educational materials be distributed so that such changes

can really be carried out and not just have been an "exciting debate." In other words that a completely sincere and full effort be made to secure these changes from the top leadership level to the club level. We mention the club level since it seems from many reports that there are also a great many leadership problems there from people who are accustomed to work in the "authoritative" manner.

- That our press and literature reflect this change of approach. That it give us more of the diversity of sincere opinion from the left and its friends in its columns, instead of allowing itself to become relatively isolated through its supposed "infallibility" or "correctness."

—W.H. and R.G., L.A.

Will our opinions be heard?

In the current discussions which are taking place throughout the party, we are told that there are great differences among the national leadership. We are not told specifically what each group is saying.

We are told that the proposed national convention is going to reflect the current discussions. As a member of the party and one of leadership on a local level, I honestly cannot see and am not convinced that these discussions are going to be heard or incorporated in the final discussions. Why does a leading comrade make such a statement? I base this feeling on past experience.

During the so-called democratic discussions which were started by the Mann-Hastings articles, we were told that everyone must contribute to the discussions, that all our thought on the subject of the Negro people as a nation were desired. We were not given both sides or all sides of the arguments, just a critique, which in the writer's humble opinion is one-sided, because the quotes are out of context.

What happened to these democratic

discussions? Before we were even off to a beginning, the National Negro Commission held its meeting but the conference was not held, even the discussions were not collated.

Take another example, the discussions around the draft program. We here too were asked to discuss fully and openly our feelings about the program of the party. But before we could even hold meetings to really discuss the proposed program, the National Committee issues thousands of copies of the final program. The changes were so slight as not to be noticeable.

When the party makes its proposal for a national convention, it must provide for the holding of elections of delegates to county, state and national conventions, including those of the comrades who have never been to such conventions. It seems to the writer that the same leadership is going to find it difficult to change by use of "blue pencil" its left-sectarians who have made the same mistakes over and over again.

—G. D., Los Angeles

The Negro people's free choice . . .

The present day democratic movement of the Negro people in the South for integration and political equality cannot be the determining factor of decision in the denial of nationhood. The struggle for concessions from Wall St. and present day slogans represent but the index of the maturity of the fight for liberation and nationhood. In the final analysis, other than the developing requisites the determining factor of decision can only be the right and power of self determination, for without this, the Negro people can never decide their destiny. No amount of concessions from monopoly capitalism

On the other hand, paternalism, which in this case is the denial of self determination, is harmful and confusing. Let us suppose that on the morrow, the American working class in alliance with other oppressed sections, declare for a Socialist democracy. What would be the attitude of our party? Will we say that we understand those democratic struggles of the Negro people in the South constitute a decision for integration with the dictatorship of the proletariat? Or should we adhere to the principle of self determination? Will they desire federation-capitalist or socialist society? Can't we see that the actual formation of state power, the irreconcilability of the class struggle must precede decision and it cannot be otherwise?

Further the law of uneven development presupposes that each nation will arrive at socialism (and capitalism) through their own independent path and state form with no interference from without. To hinder such a path would not constitute Marxist socialist conduct. The theory that the decision for integration has already been made should be rejected.

—H. S., No. Hollywood

Socialism? Others are searching too

For the vast majority of members in our party, the proposal that some consideration be given to the possibility and desirability of forming a broad mass party dedicated to achieving socialism in the USA has very little meaning. Because of the total lack of information regarding the status, purpose, sincerity (or lack of it) of the non-communist groups "favoring socialism" it is impossible to formulate any opinions based on actual knowledge.

We have just emerged from a period in which we held fast to a belief that anyone really desiring socialism would eventually find himself faced with the necessity of joining the C.P. as the only practical vehicle for achieving socialism. We contended that the logic of events, the compulsions of the developing class struggle and the vanguard role of our party would finally convince everyone of the necessity of submerging their differences and reservations regarding the party and join with it, under its discipline, in a common struggle.

If one of the results of our own re-evaluation, started by our inability to any longer shut our eyes to patent shortcomings in our work, and sharpened by the current Soviet re-evaluation, was to force us to realize that we weren't the only "peas in the pod", another result was that we had no knowledge of, let alone relationship with, or respect for others who favor socialism.

Are all non-Communists either "social-democratic apologists for capitalism" who seek to divert the class struggle through minor reforms or "Trotskyite traitors" determined to knife the struggle for socialism in every way in order to better serve their capitalist masters? Are there groupings sincerely desiring socialism but honestly differing with us on questions of theory, method, or tactics? Is there any sizable demand in this country for a brand of socialism which differs from existing practices? Has the change in the relative status of the socialist world and the capitalist world given birth to new conditions which make at least some of the historic polemics between communist and non-communist proponents of socialism academic and divorced from the reality of the tasks now facing those who desire socialism in the USA?

Which trends are genuine? which groups can be considered honest and therefore within that grouping we would like to work with in developing history? Presumably it might be possible to find a few "experts" whom we could assign the job of trying to give us an objective report in answer to these questions. Such an approach might have certain virtues but it would suffer from the shortcomings of being possibly one-sided without the membership being capable of judging its validity, and would also fail to take into account the possibility for changing relationships at different levels based on developing experiences.

It seems to me that one of the pre-conditions or a more correct approach toward other left forces would be the publication in our press of items reporting the positions taken by these other groups. If a speaker for the National Guardian addresses a meeting it would be helpful to know what was said. If Socialists decide to defend the rights of Communists, what else does this mean, if anything? Do the Trotskyites still insist that the only road to true socialism is the bloody overthrow of the Soviet Union? If so, we are entitled to see this factually reported in our press, where possible with actual quotations from articles or speeches.

Such reporting, and the comments of our column writers that could go with it would do much to set up the conditions necessary for clarifying relationships and helping our party members arrive at a position where a decision can be made on experience rather than idealistic desire or historically frozen clichés.

D.D.
Western Division
Los Angeles

A plea for fullest expression of opinion—THEN united policy

July 5, 1956.

One of the major characteristics contributing to the policy strength and effectiveness of the Party's work is the "unity" or "united will" — the agreed-upon and accepted policy, program and line, arrived at after full and deep discussions on the part of all members and units.

Would it not be more democratic if all members and units were completely informed of varying opinions and judgments, opposing or conflicting theories which may have arisen during the process of formulating the final program and policy? Minority expressions often take on importance and even validity with the passage of time and with the changing situation. Entire organizations may and often do err. Therefore—differences should be noted in the presentation of final resolutions so that future evaluation can take place.

This need not negate the need for "hammering out a united policy" by argumentation, debate and intelligent discussion followed by whole-hearted support of the conclusion reached by the majority. Experience has proven that even though a united program is finally put forth, differences have often been stifled; or individuals have not been allowed the opportunity to express them fully; or they may have

suppressed their opposition themselves feeling that they must be wrong if the majority disagrees; or they concluded it would be destructive and dis-unifying to further expound such differences.

Whatever the reason — except in the case of "enemy ideology" (which decision should never be solely in the hand of a few individuals) it is my belief the Party will be stronger if we learn to cope with and give adequate attention to dissension on all levels — informing the membership of points of view so we can all go through the reasoning and thus gain a fuller understanding of the science of Marxism and its application. Such an approach would lead to greater maturity in the Party and would help to combat dogmatism, conformism and blind acceptance.

Another problem: On the whole, for the past decade, individuals have fallen into the easy habit of accepting decision without much question and therefore without fully understanding. Whatever the reasons for such habits, it would seem essential that at the club level individuals learn how to analyze, evaluate, and make judgments based on experience and objective facts in the political, economic, social fields, etc.

This can come about by doing, ex-

periencing, by literally practicing analyzing, evaluating and judging not only in the daily practical work but on the theoretical level as well — and individuals can only do this if given the opportunity. When deep thinking and discussion on policy goes on at the higher levels and comes down in the form of final resolution, on decisions and a program of action — there is little left for the smaller units and individuals but to agree and accept.

We must find ways to stimulate individuals and clubs to contribute more fully to the general thinking and conclusions of the entire organization. One possible method which has proven effective in the field of education and other fields as well is the setting of examples — and consequently the setting of criteria and standards — which should be the responsibility of the elected leadership as well as the responsibility of the membership to request. Another method is the formulation of immediate objectives—the setting of tasks to be accomplished.

Then evaluation and judgments can take place on the basis of what we set out to achieve—was it practical? Was it correct? If not, why not? What can we learn from this experience? How apply to future actions, etc.?

—Wilshire Club, 24th CD, Los Angeles.

That 'coming economic crisis'

On the basis of the Dennis report concerning our mistaken estimates of the economic situation, 1945-1955, the question arises as to what happened.

As Marxists, we recognize that a crisis of relative over-production can take place at any point, given the proper objective factors, some of which did, and still, exist. We also know that counteracting causes can retard or prevent a crisis.

When we then consider the actual situation, there were a couple of alternatives. One: the data was adequate and a crisis was imminent. Two: although the data pointed to a critical situation, a highly possible crisis could be prevented. That is, there were counteracting factors such as the maneuverability of capital; plus the efforts of progressive groups to give theoretical guidance and a practical push.

Given these alternatives, I submit it was quite possible that no one could have foreseen what qualitative changes could take place at any given point in the future. Yes, some mistakes were made. Yet, can it be said that bourgeois economists, without the restrictions of democratic centralism, were any less lopsided in their estimates.

Now, the question of centralism in democracy. The hue and cry has been, "Add to," "Subtract from," "Revise," or "Abandon completely." What are the facts? The term "centralism" we give to the following: One, a problem must be solved within a given time limit. Two, a minority cannot be permitted to delay or prevent a decision. Three, the decision of the higher body is binding, even though each higher body completely reverses the decision of the immediate lower body. If an appeal should reach the National Convention, its decision is final, however right or wrong it may be. From this decision there is no appeal except the evaluation of history. To resist acceptance, or retard application, is properly called factionalism. And in this respect, we might well recall that after the "sound and fury" of Teheran had died away, few tried even to hint that the exhibitionism of a Darcy was equal to the behavior of a Foster.

This authority of the higher bodies and the need for discipline is precisely what gives our party its strength. This procedure was developed out of the sheer necessity to build an organization strong enough to provide for unified and decisive action, and flexible enough to guarantee a minimum of error. Now, it's true that some conditions may require semi-military discipline. But it's

equally true that under others this same procedure can and does provide for a maximum of discussion.

The quantity and quality of democratic centralism does not reside in the passing of superfluous rules. It lies in the knowledge, in the personal maturity, and in the continuous Marxist training of each comrade. The more developed is each comrade, the greater will be the maturity of his individual, and collective, decisions.

As the 20th Congress report has indicated, bureaucracy can reach the point where no divergent opinion is permitted and no appeal is possible. Under such conditions there is only one solution; to have the discipline of a Foster.

Some will ask, but what about the victims of bureaucracy? Well, comrades, the highway of the class struggle is littered with victims; past, present and future. Some will be rehabilitated; a re-evaluation has returned an Anna Louise Strong to the progressive movement. It has brought amnesty in the countries of socialism. We are re-evaluating our relationships with individuals who have drifted away.

However, suppose these victims are not among the living? What then? We have no choice but to remember that these victims are minute in number when compared to the generations of victims which are deliberately thrown into this same highway by capitalism. Socialism, on the other hand, has and will save increasing millions of people regardless of leadership errors.

We must not forget that surplus-value is the life blood of capitalism. Its extraction from the working class is the condition on which capitalism bases its existence. It guarantees its continued extraction of surplus value by the pay differential, the lynch mob, and, wholesale murder by war.

Because the world of the bourgeoisie has badly shrunk, greater pressure than ever before is being exerted on the working class. What caused it to shrink? It was the theory and practice of the Communist Party as set forth by Lenin. A theory and practice which has defied every attempt of the enemy. Today, socialism is a world system.

Why were these mistakes made? We have not yet achieved full political maturity. We still do not correctly use our knowledge in fighting the boss. We still lack much practical know-how in building unity around basic problems in mass organization. We haven't yet learned how to build Negro-White unity, or unity with other minorities.

We haven't even given proper consideration to the problems of other minority groups. Until we learn to work well on the levels we do understand, we will not easily learn to correct our errors.

Conclusions? In the foreseeable future I see no alternatives to maintaining our identity as a Communist Party; to find new ways of developing mass work to where we are the leading element in a mass coalition whose trend is toward socialism. Further, I'm convinced we should maintain the closest of ties in terms of international solidarity.

I would suggest we include in the constitution something of the following:

1. During the pre-convention period, all minority opinions within the national body be brought to the membership.
2. That State bodies submit to the National Committee annual evaluations of the program, based on county and club experiences in carrying it out. (The National Committee can then evaluate the past year's work.)
3. That all recommendations of the review a/o control commissions be approved by an equally responsible political body.
4. The work of every comrade be evaluated each year.

A. B. SEE, S.F.

PA writers should learn American

I once heard a story about a newspaper copy-reader who went through Political Affairs and cut out rhetoric and redundancies in no way changing the meaning. The final copy was one-third the length of the original. If that story ain't true, it ought to be.

Assuming a person has the background of a college education and years of reading Marxist literature so that the language is fairly understandable, there is still about eight hours work in an issue of Political Affairs. I don't have the time or the energy—not for the value received. Either P.A. should hire an expert, ruthless copy-reader or all contributors should be given a test on "How to Write the American Language Simply and Clearly." And, please, no filler articles. Information and discussion that we need as concise as possible. We are mostly weary, busy people.

—Tib, Alameda

Proposals on party democracy —and leadership

While much of the criticism concerning party democracy may be in order I think we should be clear on one thing: democracy cannot be guaranteed by rules or gimmicks. The Western Federation of Miners, with a very democratic tradition and constitution nevertheless went thru a long period of reactionary bureaucracy. The I. W. W. constitution was ultra-democratic; but Big Bill Haywood could still be pretty authoritarian, according to Foster and Gurley Flynn. The only guarantee of democracy is a courageous, responsible membership.

That doesn't mean that some changes in practice and organizational structure wouldn't be useful. Based on my knowledge of practice in this area I would suggest the following:

1. Club meetings should be a must for leadership at all levels and a sizable portion of the membership should be assigned to industrial clubs.

2. Higher bodies should not make leadership recommendations to lower bodies unless asked. With the best judgement and intentions in the world this tends to reduce the role of clubs, especially, to rubber stamps.

3. In the interests of training cadre and developing people, I think it would be wise to limit time in office. I suggest some set-up where continuing people in office beyond a certain length of time would have to be justified to higher bodies or conventions. This may not be practical for fulltime jobs but I think we should take a long look at it.

4. Of course, elections should be held at all levels with scrupulous regularity.

5. The leadership should be less defensive. I have been "lit on" but good a couple of times for disagreeing with policy or sharp criticism of practice. Other people have mostly been quiet up to now (maybe because they don't want to get lit on?) Now I hear criticism so sharp and extreme that I feel conservative. If the leadership had encouraged people to state their disagreements a little more over the years the present criticism might be more balanced and constructive.

6. I know of several instances where letters (reflecting collective discussion) were sent to Political Affairs criticizing material published. They were neither published nor answered. I also know of questions concerning policy submitted to leadership which were ignored. I don't think we should do this anymore.

I'm against scrapping democratic centralism if this means scrapping a unified disciplined, acting party. But certainly we need to get rid of the idea that anyone who questions policy is a little queer or maybe a political saboteur. This whole question of discussion and of getting opinions to the leadership needs a second look.

It may be convenient to blame all our losses and mistakes on the leadership, but I doubt that it is either accurate or productive. We all need to examine our methods of work and primarily of working with people. How many times in the not too distant past have we "won" resolutions on the floor of a union meeting and consequently lost the whole organization in the shops? How often have we fought for a leadership monopoly for ourselves and our trusted sympathizers? How often have we worked like hell to build "broad mass organization" and then treated the organizations as our own private property demanding agreement with every cliché and comma in party policy? Not the leadership but rank and file party members did these things. We don't do this so much anymore; we don't have much opportunity. I hope we've learned a lesson that in the future we'll listen to people instead of lecturing them, that we'll try to get agreement instead of acquiescence; and that we won't assume that people who disagree with us, even on basic issues, are hopeless but we will try to work with them.

Sometimes I think we've forgotten that left and sectarian are two words. A position can be sectarian regardless of its political content simply by the language it's expressed in or its timing. On the other hand, advocating a position that's quite extreme need not iso-

late a person or organization from the masses even though they don't agree. There's a question of technique.

When I've raised the question of propaganda for socialism, I've frequently met the attitude: "This sectarian dope is trying to turn the party into another S.L.P." To "pure" abstract propaganda for "pure" abstract socialism is sectarian. We take an abstract position for socialism sometime in the future and do nothing to advance socialism as such systematically on a day to day basis — does this "cement our ties with the masses"?

Just what effect would a party leaflet explaining socialism have on workers in a plant? Or a leaflet relating some problem in that plant to the desirability of socialism? Has anyone tried it recently enough to have any information? How systematically do we organize classes and discussion groups where workers will learn about socialism?

Maybe all these ideas are worthless. I certainly don't think there are any pat answers to this problem. But we don't treat it as an important problem. I suggest it is important for the following reason:

1. Without a socialist perspective the working class will inevitably follow reformist class-collaborationist leadership. Workers mostly don't want to be "heroes of struggle" they want a decent peaceful life. Talking about a "class struggle perspective" is no good; workers want an end to class struggle. Either we show them how thru socialism or they will buy a bill of goods from the class collaborationists.

2. Without a socialist perspective in our daily work there is a great temptation to degenerate into that place-seeking opportunism that characterized so much of the "Browder period."

3. It has been said that we gain the confidence of the masses by leading them on immediate issues and then they will listen when we talk about socialism. (If we don't forget to talk under the press of more "immediate issues.") There's a lot of truth in this

How to win friends, influence people

For almost three years our party has emphasized the need to integrate ourselves in the mass organizations of the American people. Why, after this period, is our failure so glaring?

Why have so many of our effective mass workers suffered extreme isolation or otherwise separated themselves from the party? Is there something in the structure of our party that makes this inevitable and places a brake on our future growth? I believe the answer is, "YES".

As a voluntary organization of human beings operating with limited funds we have an efficient apparatus. For this, we can thank those members who have five or more inner party meetings each week, and who devote countless hours to financial and sub-drives, securing signatures on left petitions, working in left centers etc.

On the vital production end of the broad arena of American life with its unions, minority organizations, political organizations, churches, etc., we have those few of our members who are effectively engaged in mass work. These mass workers are the ones who most truly play a vanguard role in the great American scene.

Our party leaders are highly intelligent people. Armed with a theory which proved itself in the life of a monarchial, semi-feudal, agrarian country forty years ago, they confidently issue directives. Many of these leaders have never been in the mainstream of American life, others have long been divorced from living reality. To them, continuity of leadership and purity of theory are the most vital necessities of the movement. Neither these nor high intelligence is a substitute for living experience.

The ideas of broad, effective mass workers seldom reach the leading bodies for two reasons: First, their free hours outside of work and family

Discussion period: it's too short

The following resolution was initiated by a special committee set up to assist clubs in the present discussion period and was adopted by the County Committee of Santa Clara County.

One of the problems which faces us immediately when trying to make inner party democracy really work by full discussion and participation on the club level is the haste with which all decisions apparently must be made and policy set.

The resultant lack of time for discussion on the basic club level makes it impossible for rank and file members to participate in any real sense in the making of decisions.

There has never been a more important discussion period than this one. We are determined that the rank and file membership of the party be encouraged in every way to contribute to the making of policy at this time. We don't want, of course, to drop all activity for the next few weeks, and even if we did so, the time allotted for a discussion of this importance would be insufficient.

It has always been our experience that once draft resolutions are actually drawn up, changes have been minimal and discussion has been stifled.

We therefore urge that the discussion period be extended considerably beyond its present early August limit, perhaps through October. If this necessitates a few months' postponement of the National Committee meeting where the draft resolutions are to be drawn up, and therefore of the National Convention, then we strongly believe this should be done.

but it neglects one aspect. Socialism has its own moral grandeur and desirability. While these qualities alone will not win a majority to socialism, we should still make use of them.

I have been told that press stories on socialist countries were adequate propaganda for socialism. I suggest that these stories merely emphasize the "foreignness", even the "subversiveness" of socialism to people not already sympathetic. Propaganda should have other purposes besides reconvinced the convinced.

T. V.—Alameda

Interim organization proposals

I should like to propose an interim reorganization of our setup in the following manner. That all positions, as we have known them in the past, be abolished. In its place an executive committee to fulfill the functions of all the former club chairmen, educational directors, organizing secretaries. I think that this form, temporarily, would serve to maintain some organizational background but be flexible and loose enough for us to begin to lay a better organizational foundation. Functions at a higher level would be attended by someone from the club executives. This would begin development of people to be fitted in by experiences on a club and community level.

I would propose that the section be reorganized to consist of a three-man or woman executive and that all representatives to the section represent active phases of the community mass organizations. These latter would be consultants.

I would propose the abolition of all divisions as cumbersome, duplicating and unnecessary. There should be more direct contact between the county and communities.

I propose that this be started immediately and that steps be taken for elections as soon as possible. We do not need to wait for final national unanimity but can experiment as we go along. The first step to be taken would be a discussion of this by many people in the following manner:

- An all-day conference for general discussion of this plus other questions raised by national reports.

- Follow up with a conference on organization.

- Election of section executives and club executives as soon as possible.

- Selection of section consultants by discussions and election.

- Clubs to meet every other week where possible.

I do not think this is any final answer and I am sure there are many weaknesses. But I think we must begin to shake loose, not be hesitant about taking news steps, and let experience teach us if there are easier and/or better ways.

—M. J. G., Western Div., Los Angeles.

resents lack of discipline and unreliability.

Let's face it. We are top heavy with leadership and inner-party forces.

What is to be done? Leaders, forget for a while the spinning of grandiose plans; devise a rock bottom minimum party program; save the press, secure the financial structure of the party, and defend the Smith Act Victims — period.

Release all possible inner party workers from their endless parade of meetings, note-keeping and reporting. Give them one simple directive: "Go out into the world and discover America. Find a place where you can really fit and eventually learn to love your new associates. Don't go out to do party work, to use people or their organizations to achieve certain predetermined ends. Interest yourself in people's problems. Help them achieve any ends they really desire so long as such ends are not for monopoly, bigotry or war."

Meanwhile, cherish those remaining effective mass workers. Seek them out. Bring them into higher policy making bodies without burdening them with inner party assignments. Don't prod them into action. They're already up to their ears in action rising out of the needs of the people with whom they work. Stop USING them; start helping them do a more effective job.

True, this suggestion ignores the great value of centralism but we can afford to forget it for a while. When it is re-established it will re-appear with the prefix "Democratic".

J. A.—Oakland

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