

In the Canadian CP

RANKS STIRRED BY SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT

By Harry Anderson

TORONTO --- The public press of the Communist party of Canada is strongly for Khrushchev. To read the weekly Tribune, including the Pacific edition, it might be concluded that the intense debate in the international Communist movement has had no repercussions whatsoever in the Canadian organization.

Long articles by the old Stalinist fossil Tim Buck have appeared week after week. Togliatti's attacks on the Chinese Communist party have been reproduced, along with similar attacks made by Gus Hall, one of the inheritors of Browder's mantle in the American Communist party. Bert Whyte, long-time correspondent in China, was brought back to add his peculiarly authoritative touch.

Despite this solid phalanx of Khrushchevist marksmen, dissatisfaction is rife in the party. This has been revealed in the internal

discussion held the past months in preparation for the national convention. Some extracts will indicate the thinking of many rank-and-file members.

E.R. Fay of Wainright, Alberta, complains that "the party is in a serious position. It is becoming a party of older people with an average of 58 years." An Alberta leader told a membership meeting, he reports, "that in 1963 he spoke at more funerals of party members than at public meetings and that included elections."

R.J. O'Neil of Scarborough, Ontario, notes the passivity of the party. "I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that the Jehovah's Witnesses are known much more for their activity than ever the C.P. has been over the past seven years."

This is a recurring theme among other writers.

William Mozdir writes that in Vancouver, British Columbia, one of the few areas in North America where the party once had considerable mass support, there has been an almost complete breakdown in discipline. "Members in responsible positions in the labor movement have not attended membership meetings. When meetings of trade union members are called many of these leading comrades have not attended these meetings."

He reports further: "This situation in Greater Vancouver over the past year has steadily worsened. Sixteen clubs in the city, with over half having from 25 to 40 members, the turn out at general membership meetings has been only 40 members with some of the clubs not even having a representative present."

Other writers express alarm at the failure of the Young Communist League to recruit.

A number of letters indicate the impact of the Sino-Soviet conflict, but none more clearly than one from Vancouver signed simply "John." That this is an important letter is indicated by the space given to it -- six and a half closely printed pages of the internal bulletin -- and by the way the top leadership handled it. They divided out the points raised by "John" and tried to answer them in a bundle of letters, some of them under the initials of the authors, two of them signed by Charles Caron and Lionel Edwards, both top leaders in British Columbia.

One of the most interesting features of these replies is that none of them sought to hit back at "John" where he is most vulnerable -- on the question of Stalin. This may be because of their own unsavory record as former members of the "personality cult."

As a spokesman for the "pro-Chinese" tendency in the Canadian Communist party, "John" is worth quoting at length.

"Put Canada First"

Attacking the National Committee's "Propositions" for the 1964 convention, "John" condemns them as a retreat from the 1954 program. Referring to the "Put Canada First" slogan, the main one advanced by the Communist party over the years, but which was also the central slogan of Diefenbaker's Tory party in the federal election last year, the writer says that the "Propositions" lack "any critical analysis of how it was possible for the main political slogan of the communist movement to be taken up and used as the central slogan of the party which has been traditionally looked upon as embracing the most reactionary section of the Canadian bourgeoisie -- the party of Bay and St. James streets."

"Are we to believe," he continues, "that the slogan which serves the interests of the reactionary and nationalist bourgeoisie can, at the same time, serve and express the interests of the revolutionary and international working class? This is apparently a new development in dialectics with which I am happily unfamiliar."

Structural Reforms

"John" calls attention to a paragraph written by the leadership: "The crying need of the working class is to fashion that unity which will make labour a force in the nation, to curb the power of the great monopolies and lead all the people who want a better life in a democratic anti-monopoly movement to achieve the reforms so long overdue and to bring about changes in the structure of the economy in the people's interests."

Here is "John's" comment: "This reference to 'changes in the structure' . . . presents us with a clue as to its source of origin. This off-spring of reformist ideology first saw the light of day at a recent convention of the Italian Communist Party.

"In view of the awe-inspiring international silence which greeted the birth of this infant following the devastating criticism of the Communist Party of China and the sneering reference to the new arrival made at a meeting of the Communist Party of France, there seemed to be some grounds for hoping the mid-wives who officiated at the birth of Togliatti's illegitimate progeny had strangled the babe at birth.

"Our National Committee, however, seem intent on breathing the breath of life into this stinking abortion."

Referring again to this paragraph, the Vancouver critic points out that the working class is relegated to secondary position. "Why -- at a time when the world system of capitalism is in crisis and socialism on the ascendant -- has it become necessary for the working class to restrict its aim to becoming a force in the nation instead of the force in the nation? (prepared to share power, appar-

ently, even with sections of the monopoly bourgeoisie)."

Emphasizing the National Committee's limitation of the struggle to the achievement of "reforms," the author declares: "So it seems that the working class is counselled not to abuse its authority, restrain its revolutionary ardour and apply itself to achieving reforms in a bourgeois democratic society."

According to this, he says, the workers will now help prolong the life of capitalism instead of ending it.

Peaceful Coexistence

Dealing with the National Committee statement item by item, he turns to the section on "peace" and points out that nowhere is responsibility placed for the drive towards war.

"It is the duty of communists to underline at all times, that the causes of war are inherent in the capitalist system," he says. "That the U.S. imperialists are the leading power in this drive toward war while the Canadian capitalist class play the willing role of junior partner. Lacking also is a clear exposition of the fact that the external drive toward war and the internal drive against labour are two sides of the same coin."

He declares that the proposals now before the party "carry with them the clear impression that peace is to be achieved through the co-operative efforts of the imperialists on the one hand and the labour and people's movements on the other."

Test-Ban Treaty

"John" deals at length with the "test ban treaty" which the National Committee statement characterizes as a great victory for peace. "First of all," he argues, "the Pearson government had no intention of testing nuclear weapons and the signing of the treaty was used as a smoke screen to cover up the bringing of nuclear weapons into Canada by the Liberal government."

The antiwar movement was ideologically disarmed by the propaganda surrounding the signing of the treaty, he believes.

"This mood is reflected," he says, "in the present policy and program of the Canadian Peace Congress which is reputed to be the most militant and politically enlightened peace group in the nation.

"Instead of promoting mass public demonstrations of protest they concentrate on sending postcards to members of parliament.

"In place of a demand for Canada to get out of NATO, they issue an appeal for a non-aggression pact between NATO and the Warsaw treaty nations.

"They appeal to the NATO bloc countries not to increase their military budgets.

"They abandon the unequivocal demand for the banning and destruction of nuclear weapons and substitute for it a demand for the confining of nuclear weapons to those countries now possessing them."

In another part of his letter, he scores the wrong and contradictory approach of the Canadian Communist party to NATO.

"On the one hand we appear to be for the disbanding of NATO by raising the demand for withdrawal, but on the other hand we call on this NATO we wish to disband to sign a non-aggression pact with the Warsaw Treaty nations.

"It's the adoption of precisely this position that made it possible for the Canadian Peace Congress to say: 'NATO came into being to provide security for its member states.'"

This wrong position, he holds, is due to failure to see the class content of NATO, "to see it as an international organization of counter-revolution."

On the problem of French-Canadian separatism, "John" points out that here, too, there is a retreat from the 1954 position which upheld Quebec's right to secede if the people there wished it.

"Anti-monopoly Coalition"

One of the most telling criticisms made by "John" deals with the "anti-monopoly coalition" policy, long a keystone for the Communist party in its theoretical structure of patriotism and nationalism.

As "John" puts it, "here we have a classical example of the incorrect application of the policy of peaceful coexistence in the field of domestic affairs."

"Capitalists and workers are shown to have a common interest in the pursuit of peace, national independence and democracy: the struggle is against monopoly capital -- which is chiefly U.S. controlled: the national interest and not the class interest is paramount."

This policy, the writer goes on, means linking the interests of the working class to those of the Canadian capitalist class and is tantamount to abandoning the fight for socialism in our epoch.

"Is it not a fact that we are an advanced industrial nation; that the bourgeois revolution has been completed and the bourgeois economy and state power more or less stable for many decades -- that capitalism, in fact, has run its course in Canada?"

He argues cogently that "counselling the workers to aid one group of capitalists over another in exchange for some limited and picayune reforms (which would be taken away from them again on the morrow when the new group became powerful and stable enough) would constitute a betrayal of their class interests."