

FORE 'N AFT

Maritime Committee for a Communist Party

No. 2

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It has come to our attention through the grapevine that the reaction of the Waterfront leadership to FORE AND AFT, was that it contained both "left and right deviations" (sic). And they further interpreted our purpose as one of desiring to build another Communist Party on the waterfront. We want to make it clear in no uncertain terms that FORE AND AFT fights for the defense of the present Communist Party against the liquidation of the Party by the present leadership. Our intentions are simply to assist all Communists who are sincerely interested in combatting and defeating the right-opportunist leadership and their hangers-on in the rebuilding of our Party on the basis of the revolutionary teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin as practiced by the foremost Communist Parties throughout the world. We would appreciate from the leadership a "clarification" on the subject of what they consider to be the "left and right deviations" in our first issue. We would be very happy to enter into a discussion with those who make with the theory on the Waterfront, for if they have learned anything about Marxism since the Duclos letter it shouldn't be kept secret.

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At the membership meeting in New York February 9, both officials and rank and filers suddenly became articulate around the question of contract expiration on June 15. Despite much oratory, the basic lack of agreement around a program involving the real and immediate interests of the seamen was apparent in all the leaders in the national office.

The leadership of the Union is split on the question of June 15 purely on procedural issues. Two different schools of opportunism cannot even agree upon their mutual fundamental agreement -- maintain the status quo -- defend the hiring hall - ignore the real interests of the seamen by projecting no program for the real advancement of their interests. We believe that 1948 is a good year in which the seamen can achieve (through strike action if necessary) great gains. A factor of decisive importance favorably influences our impending struggle: A Presidential election year in which even the most rabid anti-working class forces will be reluctant to oppose the workers' will, on the virtual eve of the November elections.

Awareness of this and other factors, makes exploitation of them mandatory in the interests of the seamen. For these reasons we must consider June 15 around real issues in the interests of the seamen. Our demands must be:

1. A four watch system which reduces the work week from 56 hours to 42 in the Deck and Engine Departments, and a forty hour week in the Steward's Department, without alteration of the present base wage scale. And which further increases the manning scale aboard all vessels, thereby reducing growing unemployment.
2. A substantial wage increase unrestricted by a Bureau of Labor Statistics' "rise in the cost of living." We must vigorously oppose an approach which leads into a blind alley of maintaining the seamen's purchasing power at the relatively low level of 1941. We must fight to extend the economic rights of the seamen.
3. Elimination once and for all (not through demagogic victory speeches by officials, but in actuality) of all existing contract inequalities between N.M.U. and other seafaring unions.

This is a correct perspective for June 15 for those who believe in the advancement of the seamen's interests. At this early date our leaders have in effect "served notice" upon the shipowners that our major demand for renewal of contract is our defense of our hiring hall. This is wrong. We must make concrete demands for improvements inasmuch as the shipowners are bloated with profits in 1948. If we continue this present farce and enter negotiations with

only token demands, with our main emphasis upon the defense of our hiring hall, the shipowners would do well to permit the Union to retain the hiring hall, at the saving to them of no wage increases or contract improvements for the seamen. We must not accept this as a great victory on June 16. Our hiring hall is no basis for negotiations. It has been traditionally ours since the inception of the Union and we refuse to consider any contract depriving us of this most prized possession. When we voluntarily make it our bargaining point, we give legality to the Taft-Hartley Law, and aid and comfort to the shipowners. Our struggle with the shipowners must be one for greater gains, not defense of those already long won.

But perhaps the shipowners armed with the Taft-Hartley Law are preparing for a showdown with the N.M.U.? Is the membership receiving a correct indoctrination for such an eventuality? In the event that upon June 15 notices appear in all steamship company offices to the effect that all future hiring will be done only through company recognized representatives, what preparations through education and propaganda are being carried out among our own membership? This alternative action on the part of the shipowners must receive serious consideration, and the membership be correctly informed. Proper mobilization for June 15 should include a series of membership conferences held regularly in all ports for the next 4 months in which such basic problems are thoroughly discussed.

1. No member hires aboard any ship after June 15 through company offices or any other crimp joints, all violators to be expelled from the Union.

2. All members to report immediately to Union Halls for strike duty and instruction in the event of no contract renewal embodying our real demands.

Should we be forced to strike, it must not be on the sole issue of the hiring hall. We must not sign any contract in which this is the single shipowner "concession," but in actuality our concession to them. Our inherent strength in the post-election year of 1949 lies in the mobilization and education of the membership for their successful struggle for gains in 1948.

Let the membership distinguish between those who merely use militant sounding phraseology, and those who give real militant leadership. The correct role of every Communist should be to prepare every non-Communist seaman for the correct struggle on June 15.

Failure to unify and solidify the membership in 1948 may result in a serious setback to the seamen, and a disastrous defeat to real Communist leadership on the waterfront. The tendencies toward bureaucratic control of the Union and the accomplishment of this aim, will be an almost mortal blow to the seamen. The struggle of real Communists must be against betrayal of the seamen's interests and for their advancement toward greater gains. Failure to accomplish this will result in the reincarnation of the defunct I.S.U. in the National Maritime Union. Real Communists can and must prevent this. We can start now by developing the closest relationship between ourselves and the non-Communist seamen. We can start now by developing a correct program for the struggle and gains on June 15. Communists must emerge as the real fighters for the seamen in 1948, not in word but in deed.

The struggle against the shipowner demands that the issue of unity in the N.M.U. be resolved. In fighting to achieve unity we must be clear at all times, in whose interests we fight for unity and for what purposes. The purpose is to unify the membership and the leadership, based on objectives and a program which represent the interests of the membership as a whole. This constitutes a principled struggle for unity and the only type of unity in which we can participate. We must reject any false unity which is based upon the factional interests of those groups engaged in a struggle for power. We have witnessed the attempts at "top level deals" by the opportunist leadership of the Party who were able to achieve a spurious "unity" with right-wing forces in initiating and voting for the red-baiting resolution at the 1946 C.I.O. convention. This form of reactionary unity does not serve the interests of the working class. We as Communists must learn where to draw the line between a policy of unity

and a policy of capitulation, and under no circumstances whatsoever can Communists decline to defend their program and aims. Failure to do this by many Communists and ex-Communists in the N.M.U. at the present time has resulted in their abdication from the class struggle and has elevated opportunism to the level of principle and ideology. Communists must assist in the forging of a correct and principled unity of membership and leadership and thereby establish a guarantee of solidarity for a successful struggle against the dipowners.

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RECOMMENDED SUBJECTS FOR EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION IN ALL PARTY BRANCHES

1. At the New York State Convention of the Communist Party held in August 1945, it was decided to meet again within a year. But the New York State Party organization has held no convention since then. Why does the membership of the Party permit the former liquidators and notorious revisionists to violate the decision of the representatives of the membership?
2. The last National Convention held in 1945 had decided, and our Constitution includes this provision, that a National Convention of our Party shall take place within two years. No National Convention has been held since that time. Why does the membership continue to tolerate the violation of the Party Constitution? Isn't the leadership of the Party, both on a State and National basis, illegally in office?
3. Why does the Daily Worker fail to discuss, analyze, and report on the first 5 issues of the Cominform newspaper (For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy) which have arrived in this country? Does the Daily Worker believe that its newspaper can be more effectively utilized in the class struggle through "Al's Selections"? (Workers, Beat the System on the Ponies).
4. Of the dozens of Communist Parties, the American Party was the first to decide not to affiliate with the Cominform. This was done without consulting the membership, without consulting the leadership of other Communist Parties, and without consulting the representatives of the Nine Communist Parties of the Cominform. Why does the membership of the Party continue to submit to this unprincipled and bureaucratic control by the former liquidators?
5. Does the membership believe that the Party leadership was justified (in the name of unity) in supporting and helping to formulate the red-baiting resolution at the National C.I.O. Convention of 1946? And does the membership also believe that the Party leadership was correct in supporting the Marshall Plan at the recent 1947 National C.I.O. Convention, or in supporting the resolution which attacked the Soviet Union at the recent 1947 State C.I.O. Convention?
6. In view of Zhdanov's report, and the reports of the representative of the Nine Parties of the Cominform (printed in complete text in the Cominform Organ) does the membership consider Comrade Foster's "analysis and interpretation" of the nature of the new democracies as Marxist or opportunist?
7. Does the membership know that a Soviet reviewer writing in the Bolshevik (official theoretical organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) had advised Comrade James Allen not to be afraid of socialism, and further characterized Comrade Allen's theory of "progressive monopoly capitalism" as "nonsense"? (Bezmisleetsa).
8. Does the membership believe that the leadership of the Waterfront Section that was removed in 1947 for "vulgarizing the correct line of the National Board", were actually guilty, or were they merely correctly and accurately applying to the Waterfront, the incorrect and opportunist line of the National Board?
9. Is the Party actually fighting to help the Greek people in their struggle against Greek fascism and American Imperialism? Also the French, Italians, Indonesians, Chinese, etcetera?
10. Does the membership know that the Communist Party of France recently decided to give systematic theoretical training to all members of the Central Committee of the French Party? -- this in one of the most outstanding Communist parties.

Why has our Party, "famous" for its rich and varied background of opportunism, liquidationism and notorious revisionism, failed, since the last National Convention, to organize beginner's classes in Marxism and Leninism for the National Committee and National Board? Does the leadership think they do not need Marxist education, or that it would be wasted on them?(See Cominform #2, Report by Jacques Duclos)

11. Use "For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy" (Organ of the Information Bureau of the Communist Parties) for education.

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