

POINT

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FORE 'N AFT

(SPECIAL ISSUE)

SAVE THE NMU

The capitalist newspapers and radios boomed to the nation the fact that of 246 offices in the National Maritime Union elections, the C.P. supported slate had not captured one. This was indeed a terrific reversal for the trade union movement, because the NMU was a union built and led by Communists, with an overwhelming majority of its officers either Communist or C.P. supported. At present the NMU is the cause of rejoicing for reaction for it represents one of the "left" unions gone over almost completely (at the top) to the Murray camp-the camp of war, the Marshall Plan, and red-baiting. This development in such an important union means another disastrous step in the disintegration of the American trade union movement.

What lies behind the defeat of the CP machine and the victory of the Curran Caucus, and how can the NMU be rescued from the pro-Murray, Marshall Plan, Taft-Hartley affidavit-signers and red-baiters in the caucus? How can the NMU once again take its place as a leader among militant unions? Many sincere and principled Communist and non-Communist NMU members felt a struggle would have to be conducted against the entrenched bureaucratic and corrupt CP machine, but they wanted it to be a principled fight. Some ex-Party members engineered fancy excuses to justify their "temporary" unity with Trotskyites, red-baiters, pro-Marshall Plan and pro-Taft-Hartley affidavit-signing elements in the Caucus in order to defeat an entrenched opportunist machine. Where do they go from here? Will they now conduct and lead as unrelentless a struggle against the Marshall Plan? Will they do it with resolutions as they accused the Party leadership of doing, or through actions and education of the membership as to the Marshall Plan criminal war plots and counter-revolutionary intrigues against the People's democracies of Europe

TURNING

and the Soviet Union? Will they lead the workers in militant action in refusing to load ships for Greece, China and Indonesia? Will they abide by the last NMU Convention resolution in giving all-out support to the WFTU in exposing and fighting against the criminal plans now being hatched in top AF of L and CIO circles to destroy the WFTU? Will they begin now, before it is too late through discussion articles in the Pilot and at membership meetings to educate the members on the dangers inherent in signing the Taft-Hartley affidavits? (The CIO through its national representative Irving Abramson and through Pete Mosell, regional CIO director for NY have already informed Sam Wolchok that they support his ultimatum to the six left RWDU unions to sign the T-H affidavits or else--). The expelled and dropped Communists who are now officials must make themselves clear on these three major issues. Any apathy on their part will be construed by all class-conscious workers as a betrayal of the workers interests, the new peoples democracies and the Soviet Union.

Fore 'N Aft, one of the participating groups in Turning Point, refused to support either of these two machines in the NMU elections. In issue No. 4 the editors pointed out: "Regardless of which unprincipled machine wins in the election, the problem of resurrecting Communist work on the waterfront remains." Behind a smokescreen of so-called Marxist phraseology (at times) the CP machine held the same position as Curran. It helped to make the hiring hall a negotiable and thus defensive issue as early as February. It supported the Marshall Plan along with the other "left" unions at the 1947 CIO Convention; and in the NMU in particular confused the issue by merely calling for "no transfer of ships" instead of a principled and anti-war, internationalist stand on the Marshall Plan. With this Curran heartily concurred from the most chauvinistic standpoint and went the CP one better by also demanding the return of ships transferred to the Soviet Union.

The CP shouted "pork chops", and Curran shouted "pork chops" on all basic issues. Both machines had equally unprincipled and class-collaborationist positions. Only a struggle for power was involved. But certain other factors led to the defeat of the CP machine. This was the machine in power, and thus exposed to the NMU rank and file as a corrupt, pie-card machine which fell down over and over again even on simple pork chop and trade union issues, which pursued an open policy of class collaboration under Browder, and slightly less under Foster and Dennis. Its insistence on the status quo during the 1947 negotiations with the shipowners (even though the owners were bloated with record-making profits) on the pretense that "any further demand at this time would bring on reprisals on the part of the government under the T-H law", exposed it as a social-democratic, class-collaborationist opportunist machine. It was exposed as criminally wasting and spending union funds in perpetuating a top-heavy, useless job apparatus consisting of office help, appointed officials and organizers, whose only qualifications were membership in the Party. The war brought on a mass influx of petty-bourgeois, job-seeking and opportunist party members to the NMU. A letter from a local Party bureaucrat entitled you to either a job in the NMU, seamen's papers, or an NMU membership book.

Brand new NMU'ers of all derivations without any knowledge of NMU problems learned to speak a tough seaman's language and in no time were elevated to leading positions in the waterfront section.

The word "Trotskyite" was tagged on to anyone who disagreed with the wrecking role of the waterfront leadership. It was bandied about so much that the word not only lost its significance or meaning, but led many of the rank and file non-Party and to a lesser degree Party members to construe a Trotskyite as one who was either dropped or expelled from the Party. The real trotskyites who were known by name in the NMU were not even mentioned by the waterfront Party bureaucracy under the sinister influence of the unprincipled Al Lannon. The Trotskyites were made to look like angels as compared to the ex-Party members whether dropped, expelled, caucus or non-caucus.

The CP was exposed by ^ahandwriting expert, hired by the Union, as a stuffer of NMU ballot boxes in the 1946 Union elections. This point was conceded by the CP when it withdrew its candidate to avoid a scandal. Back door shipping and favoritism became a routine "tactic".

During the Keith-Young by-elections it issued hundreds of membership books, for the purpose of influencing the elections, to seamen without the qualified time to become members. In union election after election it issued concealed slates with the names of Party candidates whose first and in some cases only interest in Communism was "job security." In this dirty work the UOPWA staff employed in the Union was used effectively, from the Dispatchers cage, to the Registration window to the Mailroom. It was guilty of the worst sort of chauvinism in organizing minority groups into blocs for the purpose of influencing the recent election. With thousands of new and young seamen coming into the industry during the war period, with the prestige of the Soviet Union at an all-time high, it could have gained thousands of recruits and thus established a real vanguard base in the industry. Instead, it organized a trade union leadership school under the direction of Leo Huberman, assisted by Dan Boano in which it taught reading, writing and no striking and how to get along with the shipowners. Those Party officials who disagreed with the Browder line were labeled and slandered and subsequently either dropped or expelled. The first time the Party machine was compelled to come out into the open with a slate of candidates because of the opposing Rank and File Caucus slate, it went down to defeat in such a manner that in a national election taking in every seaport in the country, it failed to elect one candidate. In the Port of New York where it had its greatest strength stretching from the National Committee to the State Committee to the Waterfront Section, plus control of the top-heavy job apparatus, office staff, the Pilot, appointed jobs, and with almost every official a Communist or sympathizer it was defeated by more than 2 to 1. This election is another episode--the worst so far--in the decline of the CP in the trade unions.

It was the CP leadership's degeneracy - which was all the more exposed in the expulsion of many maritime Communists who fought the corrupt and opportunist CP waterfront leadership - that led many honest and progressive seamen to abandon the slate they had supported for many years.

The wave of red-baiting set off by the Pandora's box of the CIO red-baiting resolution, written by Communists, facilitated Curran's wooing of the more backward elements in the NMU. This factor alone could not have won the election for Curran. In fact it would have lost it for him if the other factors had not prevailed. Actually, the

majority of the NMU did not vote to join the Murray camp, but to rid itself of a rotten machine. The Curran machine had on its side the efforts of certain expelled Communists who justified all their unprincipled alliances on the basis of a temporary "unity" to defeat and expose the corrupt CP bureaucracy. Thus in their own ironic version, the expelled leaders in the NMU indulged in the very tactic they opposed in the CP; unity with red-baiters, pro-Marshall Planners, to effect a temporary "victory". It remains to be seen how "temporary" this unprincipled "unity" will be, and what kind of a "victory" has really been achieved.

The position of all real Communists should have been to fight on issues, not machines. As Fore 'N Aft, #6 stated:

"The responsibility that Communists must have in any situation is to give the workers a definite, non-double talk program in order to educate them beyond the limited horizon of one election...The elections are not the most important factor in the NMU today. More important is the development of an independent Communist policy and principled Communist corps." (p. 15)

This is the position Communists and all class-conscious workers should take now. Fight for a correct and militant working class program for wage increases and improved conditions, don't give an inch on the Hiring Hall, fight the Marshall Plan, support the Progressive Party in its anti-war, anti-fascist program, fight the Taft-Hartley law in action, not just in the courts, fight red-baiting by not giving an inch to the red-baiters, remain in the NY CIO Council, and in the WFTU, and refuse to transport arms to China, Greece and Indonesia.

All NMU'ers must fight Curran's proposal to withdraw from the NY City CIO Council. Some of the expelled "uniters with Curran" believe they can withdraw from the correct position on the Marshall Plan, simply by shouting that the CIO Council is CP controlled, etc. etc. In their vengeful but unprincipled fight against the CPUSA they would destroy not only the CP, but also all opposition to the Marshall Plan and war. Like Foster, they believe "unity or else" (or else a principled and difficult battle against social democracy in the labor movement), and this slogan leads them where it led the CP opportunists - to collaboration with red-baiters and the planners of an anti-Soviet war. Some of them even doubt the correctness of opposition to the Marshall Plan because it interferes with their "unity". In the glory of their "pure" trade unionism, whose counterpart can be found only in the CPUSA itself, they view all issues from the ultra-economist view of their trade union dues. Pay dues to the bureaucratic CIO Council? Never! This is the morass to which unprincipled power politics lead some who forgot they were fighting for Socialism.

A real Communist today must fight especially on the issue of the Marshall Plan and the fight for peace. If the CPUSA merely gives lip-service but does not fight on this issue, then it is all the more important for a real Communist to fight and not to withdraw to clear the path to defeat. Indeed the NY CIO Council does not fight hard enough on these issues. It is true indeed that wherever the CP's corrupting influence is felt, the fight is only half-hearted. To this day, the CP

has not declared war on Murray. But Murray is fighting a shrewd war not only against the CP but, more important, against the entire anti-war movement in the country. Knowing how corrupt the CP apparatus is, he attacks at the weak points, and thus rallies to his support such mistaken and righteous moralists as the expelled Communists in the NMU. Were this tactic to be carried to its logical end, every progressive issue in this country could be sabotaged by pointing to the greater or lesser influence of the CP bureaucracy.

Whatever faults the CIO Council has it represents opposition to the Marshall Plan, to Murray's red-baiting, and support for the anti-fascist, anti-war program of the Progressive Party. To withdraw from the City CIO Council means to enter the camp not only of the Marshall Plan and red-baiting, the camp of Murray and Dubinsky, but also the camp of Taft-Hartleyism. It is only one step from the red-baiting of the Murray forces to the signing of the Taft-Hartley affidavits. If the NMU is not to join the camp of those treacherous CIO unions which split other unions and kowtow to the bosses, it must not follow the tendency to conform with the Taft-Hartley law.

Surely all class conscious workers must realize that the temporary advantages of those right-wing unions whose names appear on the NLRB ballots is the advantage of company unionism. And yet the "pure" trade union views of many ex-Communist leaders of the NMU are leading directly to this pitfall. The watchword for all NMU'ers now more than ever must be "NO RED-BAITING" - for this is the path which the Murray-forces are determined to travel through various devious and constitutional devices. The rights of every NMUer to express his political views must be protected. The corrupt practices of the CP bureaucracy must in no way be confused with the right to fight Murray and Curran's pro-Marshall Plan program. What may be revenge for some expelled Communists, is for the capitalist class an unholy step in the steadily increasing destruction of the trade unions.

The NMU can become united once more only on the basis of one unity-militant unity against the bosses, against the bosses' war, against the bosses' emasculation of the trade unions via the Taft-Hartley law, against the worldwide oppression and colonialism inherent in the Marshall Plan, and most particularly in the NMU against the trusty weapon of the capitalists and their flunkies in the working class - red-baiting.

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IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES:

- The Progressive Party Convention
- Critical Review of Harrison George's "Supplement to The Crisis" and "The Party"
- Letters and Discussion of TURNING POINT'S Declaration
- The C.P.U.S.A. Convention
- Tito's "Get Tough" Policy