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**POLITICAL RESOLUTION ON THE WAR AND THE TASKS OF THE WORKERS
PARTY - Adopted by the National Plenum
August 10th - 11th, 1940**

The World war has entered a second stage of its development. In the first stage, marked by almost a year of warfare, Germany has conquered virtually all of northern and western Europe and destroyed the old Anglo-French domination of the continent. Europe has been partitioned into three spheres by the victor who took the lion's share and is dividing the rest among her allies, Italy and the Soviet Union. The second stage, by all indications, will be marked by the direct assault upon England and the British Empire with the aim of dividing it, as well as the French colonial empire, between Germany and Italy, and the Soviet Union and Japan. If England succumbs to the blows of Germany and Italy, the stage will be set for the third round which will be marked, in all probability, by a titanic struggle between the United States, on the one side, and German and/or Japan on the other, for hegemony in Latin America and the Orient.

The course of the war to date has confirmed in all essentials the analysis and position adopted by our party before and since the outbreak of hostilities.

(a) This is not a localized, continental war, but a world war, the world war, in a far more literal sense than was the war of 1914-1918. Not a single continent is exempt from participation in it. Tomorrow, that will hold true of every country of the world. Before the present war is finally ended, every single country of the entire globe will have been drawn into it as a direct or indirect participant. Unlike the last war, in this one there are no neutrals; there are belligerents and non-belligerents who are feverishly preparing for participation at the earliest moment.

(b) This is not a war between democracy and fascism or between national-socialism and plutocracy, but a war of imperialist powers for the re-division of the world's spoils - colonies, spheres of influence, sources of raw materials and of cheap labor, trade routes, fields of investments, etc.. This has been graphically revealed by the outbreak of the war in the Near East and the colonies of northern Africa; by the overnight transformation of "democratic" France into totalitarian France under the continuing rule of the French "democrats"; by the struggle for the colonial domination of Asia between England and Japan and the United States by the desperate efforts at cooperation between the United States democracy and the Latin-American dictatorships; by the progressive development towards a totalitarian regime in all the democratic countries.

(c) This is not a war for the defense of the Soviet Union from imperialist attack, but an imperialist war in which the Kremlin autocracy is participating integrally. In the past year, the slogan of "defense of the Soviet Union" has meant, concretely and in practice, objective assistance to the military strategy of Berlin-Rome, and facilitating the aggrandizement and consolidation of the Stalinist regime. The fact that the imperialist subjugation of parts of old Poland, of the three other Baltic countries, of southern Finland, of Bessarabia and Bukovina, tomorrow of the rest of Finland and parts of Turkey, of

the Near East and of China, may result in a purely military fortification of the Soviet Union against eventual attacks by Germany, does not mitigate the counter-revolutionary strategy and conduct of the Kremlin in any decisive respect; nor does it negate the fact that the Soviet Union is today still in the camp of the Rome-Berlin axis. In the first place, the manner and conditions under which the "sovietization" of the conquered territories has been accomplished does incalculable harm not only to the cause and interests of the international labor and revolutionary movements but to the interests of the Russian Revolution itself, which is by no means compensated by the economic changes bureaucratically introduced in the conquered lands. In the second place, the alliances in both imperialist camps are of the most precarious nature (as shown by the recent and bitter disruption of the Anglo-French alliance, which did not negate the fact that the alliance existed up to the time of its disruption. Should Germany begin to suffer a number of defeats at the hand of her adversaries, thus promoting a shift of the Soviet Union from one imperialist camp to the other, there is every reason to believe that the Stalinist bureaucracy will continue its work of imperialist depredations, only under the hegemony of another war camp. The defense of the Russian Revolution continues, in the present war, to call for the policy of revolutionary defeatism against the Kremlin despots. The slogan of the defense of the Soviet Union is conceivable only in the case of a direct imperialist assault upon the Union and under conditions where the bureaucracy (or, in the best variant, its revolutionary successors) is conducting a progressive war.

(d) The sensationally speedy defeat of the democracies on the continent, and especially of France, has not been without its influence on the ideology and conduct of the bourgeoisie in the still undefeated capitalist-democratic lands. The fascist totalitarianism of Germany does not represent a new social order differing both from socialism and from capitalism. It is rather the only way in which the social system of capitalist private property can continue to rule in countries which, like Germany, are compelled to solve in a non-socialist manner the social and political problems that confront them in this period of highly aggravated contradictions and conflicts, capitalist disintegration, continuous world war, and national and social revolutions. The violent suppression of the class struggle, the crushing of the working class as an independent force, the intensity of exploitation, the extreme centralization of all economic and political controls in the hands of an enormously bureaucratized state, the replacement of the "normal" capitalist economy by an overwhelmingly war economy -- all these give a country like Germany the military-economic basis for a striking effectiveness-superiority in modern total war. However harmful or restrictive this form of rule may be to the interests of capitalists in any given country, or to the interests of individual capitalists, or to the interests of capitalist groups, or to the temporary interests of all capitalists -- Fascism is no longer a matter of choice but of inexorable necessity for capitalist society. Hence, the growing trend in all capitalist countries towards the totalitarian reorganization of economy and politics, England and the United States included. Such reorganization (especially when all other things, such as natural resources, man power, etc., are more or less equal) is the only effective way in which the bourgeois

democracies, with their outmoded political and economic set-up, can meet the challenge of countries like Germany.

The Workers Party is not indifferent to the outcome of a struggle between bourgeois democracy and fascism. It demonstrated this fact in the position it took during the civil war in Spain. The present war, however, is not a struggle between two political systems but rather between two rival imperialist camps. To support, in any way or to any degree, the imperialist democracies in the war is not only inadmissible in principle from the standpoint of the working class but means, moreover, support for the victory of one or another totalitarian reorganization from above (as in France) or by a mass fascist movement (as in Germany and Italy), democratic capitalism is doomed in the present war. The alternatives before humanity is the victory in the war of one or another fascist or totalitarian power, with its concomitant economic, political and cultural barbarism, or the victory of the proletarian social revolution, the victory of the Third Camp, with its economic, political and cultural reorganization of society.

In stating that the Workers Party is not indifferent to the outcome of the struggle between bourgeois democracy and fascism, a practical program of action follows. The fight for socialism does not mean the abandonment of the fight to maintain and extend all democratic rights. Quite the contrary. The fight for democracy, from the proletarian standpoint, can be conducted only by socialist, i.e., class struggle means; victory in that fight can come only as a by-product of the struggle for socialism. The Workers Party, insisting at all times on the need of independent class action by the workers, warning against any tendency towards wiping out class lines by subordinating the workers to the control or leadership of the bourgeoisie, champions every genuine struggle to maintain and extend democratic rights in the country. The party demands the right to vote for all men and women from the age of 18 upwards, and the abolition of all restrictions upon the Negro's right to vote. The party demands the right of the people to vote on a declaration of war. The party demands the right of the armed forces to elect and control their officers. The party demands nationalization of industry, particularly of war industry, and workers control of industry. The party demands a people's army, free of the control of the military caste and the imperialist government. The party demands trade union and consumers control of price regulation to prevent rises in the cost of living. The party demands an end to secret diplomacy. The party resists all efforts to curb or destroy the right of free speech, free press, free assembly, and the right to organize and strike.

e) The choice before the peoples of the world is not confined to the victory of the fascist powers or the democratic empires, and support to the latter is not a lesser evil. There is a third choice - the victory of the Third Camp, the camp of opposition to both imperialist bands; the camp of the workers and colonial peoples of the world. In less than one year of the war, the existence, virility and promise of the Third Camp has already been revealed. Just as the German victory over France showed again the rottenness of bourgeois democracy, its organic kinship with totalitarianism, so it showed

the tremendous recuperative powers of the masses, always latent and ready to burst to the surface. We do not yet know how many hundreds of thousands of French proletarians were ready, at the time of the debacle, to take up arms in revolutionary struggle against their own ruling class and against Germany - that is, against the two imperialist camps. Both the French and German bourgeoisies feared the imminence of a new Commune in France, in the same way that both the English and German bourgeoisies fear the prospects of a national revolution in India. To acknowledge, as we do, that the immediate prospects of world revolution are dark, does not mean that we have anything in common with pessimism which must be valiantly and systematically resisted. The right to revolutionary optimism is granted us by an objective study of the world situation. The world is not headed fatally towards a peacefully-maintained fascist reorganization and unity. Quite the contrary. With every military victory, the difficulties and contradictions of the victor are multiplied. With every additional hour in which the world's precious stores of material wealth and human life are destroyed in the war, with every additional people whom Germany or Italy or Japan subjects to the rapacity of capitalist exploitation and national oppression, the difficulties and contradictions of the victor are multiplied. Before a year of the war had elapsed, the French masses were on the eve of revolt. That it did not materialize is not evidence that it will not in the future, but evidence only of the state of unpreparedness of the masses and the great difficulties of revolt under the conditions of fascist rule still unimpaired by military defeat. The workers may suffer more than one defeat in the period to come, but the ability of the ruling classes to continue in power and resolve their problems in their way is exactly as limited as the endurance of the masses under the unspeakable horrors of the war. Unbroken tenacity, and a calm understanding of the overpowering factors which make for the continued disintegration of capitalist society, are an indispensable requirement for the preservation and extension of the revolutionary movement which prepares for the sure triumph of world socialism.

The United States is now participating as a non-belligerent in the second world war with all the power at its command. A formal declaration of war right now against Germany, could scarcely produce any serious military changes in the immediate situation. The military preparedness of the United States, suitable perhaps for a war like that of 1914-1918, is not suited to the present war. The latter calls for the rigid regimentation of labor and of industry, the high centralization of economic controls in the hands of the imperialist state, organization of the country on the basis of an inclusive war economy, the accumulation of great stores of material reserves, vast resources of warfare supplies (ships, airplanes, tanks, artillery, munitions) and of trained man power counting millions, military mechanization, the suppression of all political opposition to the war. In most of these fields, American imperialism has thus far accomplished very little compared to what it must accomplish, to what it has set itself to accomplish and to what it will accomplish in order to play a decisive and victorious role in the war.

Despite the previous lag, however, the huge material and moral resources of American capitalism enabling it to undertake and carry out a war preparations program of unprecedented proportions. It is absurd to imagine that the United States is preparing to enter the war to preserve democracy, in view of the rapid pace at which democratic rights and traditions are being governmentally destroyed before our very eyes. It is no less absurd to imagine that the United States will enter the war in order that England shall emerge the victor from it. If the main reason for war entry is to halt the advance of German and Japanese imperialism and to destroy them, another reason in the plan of American imperialism is to control a victory of one of its principal international competitors, Great Britain. Like Germany, the United States has no less an ambition than to fall heir to the accumulated loot and power of all previous and existing empires. The previous lag of the United States in this sphere also dictates the breathtaking tempo of its economic, political and military preparations for the war. The Havana Conference, like the whole of the United States' Latin-American policy, was a desperate but still far from successful attempt to establish American imperialist hegemony over the Western world to the exclusion of Germany, Italy, Japan and (not least of all) England. The increased tension of U.S.*Japanese relations indicates a similar trend in the Orient; the United States wants nothing less than the ousting of Japan from China and the occupation of the Oriental positions lost by the old European empires (Dutch East Indies, Indo-China, etc.). The call for a mighty two-ocean navy, for 50,000 airplanes, for the conscription of millions, for a prodigious arms and munitions establishment, the expenditure of billions for war within a few weeks, all indicate the scope of America's imperialist ambitions and her imminent participation in the war.

While the two bourgeois parties have already achieved a complete and all but unanimous agreement on the question of foreign policy and of war preparations and participation, with an almost total annihilation of even the specious isolationist spokesmen, the same cannot fortunately be said about the working class. In the name of "national defense" the government (both parties) has already succeeded in adopting, formally and informally, a whole series of measures against the working class, the labor movement and the country's traditional democratic rights. Regimentation and persecution of aliens merely precedes regimentation and persecution of the militant labor movement. Today the Communist Party, tomorrow others, are being deprived of their electoral rights, and their supporters legally and extra-legally intimidated, hounded and even imprisoned. While Big Business blatantly and cynically demands a high percentage of profit for its patriotism, there are growing demands for "compulsory cooperation" (i.e., emasculation) of the labor movement in "national defense"

There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the American people, the working class included, has been duped and conquered by the lies of imperialist patriotism. But while the workers everywhere are for "national defense", convinced of its need as a means of protecting themselves from the scourge of fascism, there is no appreciable chauvinistic spirit among them in the sense of supporting a hue and cry for war. Quite the contrary. The working class is opposed to

American entry into the war. Moreover, notwithstanding the waves of propaganda, the working class is almost unanimously opposed to conscription. So much so, indeed, that such ardent patriots as William Green and John L. Lewis have been compelled by the sentiments of the membership of their unions to take a public stand against peace-time conscription.

It is most important for our Party to utilize this entirely healthy and progressive sentiment for the purpose of mobilizing the widest possible working class sections in opposition to the imperialist war, to the preparations for war, and to all anti-labor and anti-democratic legislation. Our Party's position has, of course, nothing in common with pacifism, pacifist opposition to war or to conscription and military training. On the contrary, as representatives of the militant proletariat, we are for the prosecution of the most consistent and intransigent class struggle against all oppression and oppressors. Our party is for the defense of the proletariat by armed force against fascism and all other forms of reaction. Our Party, furthermore, is for an organized and trained people's army. However, in every stage of the development of the struggle against the imperialist war and the preparations for it, it is necessary to seize upon that particular link in the chain which will pull the chain the longest possible distance in the direction of working class victory. At the present moment while making clear our rounded revolutionary position, it is necessary to bend every effort to give expression, clarity, organization and continuity to the mass sentiment against conscription. The party must participate in every mass movement opposing the adoption of draft legislation. In such movements, it must find a field for the elaboration of its fuller program, for the popularization of its fundamental position. The propaganda for a people's army is in no wise contradictory to our opposition to conscription and bourgeois militarism in any and all forms; on the contrary, the one is the indispensable complement of the other. At all events, far from flying in the face of the progressive anti-war sentiment of the masses which, at the moment, expresses itself in hostility to conscription, the party must support and promote this sentiment and seek to direct it along unambiguously working-class lines. At all times, it must be borne in mind, our party must supplement the agitational slogan of "Down with conscription!" with the propaganda slogan of "For a People's Army!"

While utilizing every possibility, no matter how small, to advance the agitational campaign against the imperialist war, and to participate in every important movement of action against it, it would be blindness on our part not to recognize the facts. In the present situation in the United States, and above all with the paucity of forces and isolation of the genuinely revolutionary movement, our main and most fruitful work will and must be the revolutionary education of as large as possible a militant vanguard, i.e., propaganda and party-building work. To pursue the illusion that it is possible for our party, in the present period of a rising wave of capitalist patriotism, defensism and class persecution, to become a popular mass movement or one with great mass influence, is a self-deception. It will inevitably lead either to opportunism or to the indifference that follows disappointment. Our task is to prepare for the next period. This means

to swim against the current, to bear up under the blows and difficulties of unpopularity. This means the education and training and inspiring of our movement in such a way that it is able to swim against the current, is able to grow stronger despite the inescapable defections due to bourgeois and patriotic pressure. The movement must be able, with the turn of events, to take its proper place in the ranks of the working class mass movement.

It would be irresponsible and criminal for us to forget the lessons of the last world war and what it did to the labor and revolutionary movements. It would be simple blindness to ignore what is occurring before our eyes in the labor and revolutionary movements, to console ourselves with roseate unrealities, or to take our wishes for the unpleasant truths. The mass sentiment against the war has no militant, class-conscious, revolutionary leadership, without which it is doomed to extermination by the war machine. The bourgeois and social patriotic lies about a "war against fascism", a "war for democracy" has duped millions and will dupe millions more for a whole period. Patriotic and democratic pressure has brought more than one former socialist organization to its fall. The story of the social-Democratic Federation is an old one. It is being repeated now with the Thomasite Socialist Party and the Lovestoneite organization. No organization, no matter how revolutionary its program and leadership and tradition, will be completely immune from the war infection. Our task is to increase our immunity to the maximum, thus enabling us to counteract more effectively the same virus in the working class as a whole.

Our membership, our sympathizers, our contacts, must be educated and re-educated ceaselessly in the fundamental principles of revolutionary Marxism with particular reference to the principles and traditions of socialist internationalism and the marxian teachings on imperialism, democracy and war. Without thoroughly absorbing into our very bloodstream these teachings, our movement is doomed to disintegration or sterility.

A great responsibility is upon us to resist the infiltration into our movement or its periphery of bourgeois-patriotic or defensist ideas, of any kind or to any degree or in any form.

The present world war is an imperialist war. It is a war for defense of the nation (in so far as the big capitalist nations are concerned, since what is said does not hold true of colonial or semi-colonial countries) in one sense only, namely, that each bourgeoisie seeks to defend the soil upon which its property, its property rights, its right to exploit and oppress, its right to rule, are to be found. Except in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the revolutionary Marxists are unconditionally opposed to national defense under capitalism, and do not give an iota of moral, political or material support to it. In any of the present imperialist countries, we will defend the nation and its government only if capitalist class rule is overthrown and the rule of the working class established.

The fear and hatred of fascism, of Hitlerism, which is felt throughout the world, and more specifically and actively expressed by the workers in the democratic capitalist countries does not change our fundamental opposition to national defense in the slightest degree. It is a political factor, however, that must be taken into consideration in determining our tactics and our agitation. The "democratic" hatred of fascism and the "democratic" anti-fascist patriotism of the masses in countries like France, England and the United States has a distinct class trend, a proletarian trend, and is potentially progressive. This trend, however, has been deformed and perverted by the ruling class to serve its interests, i.e., imperialist interests. The fact that honest masses of anti-fascist workers, who do not want colonies but want only to crush fascism, support the imperialist war, does not in any way change the nature of the war or our attitude towards it. Our duty, however, is to try to direct this sentiment into truly proletarian and revolutionary channels. It is for that reason that, among other slogans, we raise the slogan of a People's Army, trained, directed and controlled by the working class and its responsible organizations. But this propagandist slogan - and that is what it is at the present stage - would under present conditions lead us directly to national defensism, unless our press and spokesmen constantly coupled it with the slogan of a workers' government. A people's army is a necessity for the struggle against fascism and all forms of bourgeois reaction. A "people's army" subject to capitalism is a myth or a snare. To speak of a people's army without a workers' government is to prepare objectively for defensism under capitalist rule. To speak of national defense with a people's army under a workers' government, that is, with the smashing of capitalist rule, is to prepare in the only possible way for the struggle against reaction and imperialist war.

This does not mean a parrot-like repetition, in season and out, of the simple formula; socialism alone means peace and freedom. It does mean, however, the timely use of all our transitional slogans applicable in the war situation, as indicated above in the demands we put forward in the fight against fascism. It means a patient explanation that the capstone of our program is the rule of the workers, workers' power, a workers' government.

Although the general line of Labor Action has given a faithful and militant presentation of our anti-war position, what is reiterated in the above paragraphs has not always been emphasized with fullest clarity by our spokesmen and our press. It is imperative that the greatest vigilance be maintained on this point in the future.

The theoretical education of our members and sympathizers and of advanced workers in general is so particularly important in this period that more attention and space must be devoted to it in our monthly organ, both in the form of exposition and of polemical criticism and debate with social-patriots and backsliders. Similarly, though in simpler and more popular language, our weekly organ and our youth paper must conduct an educational campaign on the revolutionary anti-war and anti-fascist position. Similarly, all branches of the party and the youth must devote meetings, specially set aside for this pur-

and the youth must devote meetings, specially set aside for this purpose and even classes to the elucidation of our position to members and sympathizers. Finally, also, our pamphlets must be devoted to one or another timely phase of the same question - all looking towards the preparing and training and consolidating of a revolutionary vanguard worthy of the opportunities that will be offered it by tomorrow's revolutionary situations.

(Note: The Committee keenly regrets the delay in getting this Plenum resolution before the membership of the Party and the Y.P.S.L.. Other calls on the efforts of comrades involved, came unexpectedly after the Plenum and thus prevented completing the work of editorial revision decided upon following the discussion in the Plenum. However, what is dealt with in this resolution is not of mere passing importance and is not less timely now than it was a month ago. As is indicated in the resolution, it is expected that the line it presents will offer the party branches material for educational discussion for the next period. Comrades desiring to express diverging views on controversial questions dealt with here, may, as in our tradition, express them in the form of compact discussion articles which will be printed in our Internal Bulletings. - Editor.)

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN LOS ANGELES AND THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE
CONSCRIPTION ACTIVITIES OF THAT BRANCH.

Los Angeles, Cal.
July 30, 1940

To the Political Committee:

..... Not, the main subject of this letter. I mentioned to you that we were planning an Anti-Conscription campaign drive in L.A. Last night at the Branch meeting the campaign committee reported its plans to the membership, and the response was quite enthusiastic.

Briefly, our plans are as follows:

Since we feel that there are possibilities for an extensive mass movement in the issue of conscription, we decided not to limit the campaign to those elements who can be reached and influenced in the name of the party but rather to attempt to draw in all possible organizations and individuals into a broader campaign. Since time does not permit for lengthy negotiations, maneuvers, conferences, etc., we have established a committee called The California Committee against Conscription. At present, of course, the Committee includes only the party plus an individual who is sympathetic and has a multigraph machine, which will prove invaluable in this campaign. However, we feel confident that we can secure endorsement and cooperation for the committee from a number of organizations, possibly unions and individuals, some of whom are members and officers of organizations and unions. We have already published in the name of the committee an initial leaflet, enclosed, with a very bad typographical error, plus petitions. In the next day or two we will also have stationery for the committee which will be issued for contacting all organizations in L.A. that we know of, plus 20 "stop-Conscription" placards, likewise signed by the Committee. Also "stop-Conscription" ticker and further leaflets.

We are planning as the first climax of the campaign, a mass meeting in a large central auditorium in the name of the Committee to which all organizations who respond favorably will be invited to send a speaker. On further item which we will use in the campaign is a button, saying "stop Conscription" signed CCAC.....

Have you discussed the possibility of initiating a national organization along the lines of the one we plan? Are you planning to issue any petitions -- not signed by the Party -- which we could use. (ours are not very good)

Comradely yours,

Mike

Los Angeles, Calif.
August 5, 1940.

To the Political Committee:

The California Committee against Conscription, of which I wrote you, has been launched. A meeting was held of Party members and sympathizers to launch the campaign. There were approximately 35 people present, including about 12 non-party members. The report of the plans for the campaign was accepted with enthusiasm and a number of good suggestions were made. Sub-committees were elected to carry out the work, and virtually all of the non-party members volunteered for one committee or the other. \$23.00 was raised in cash and pledges. Approximately 4,000 leaflets have already been distributed. Saturday night we conducted a procession down Broadway with large placards, saying "Stop Conscription," signed by the Committee. Response was fair, although encountered a considerable amount of opposition. I would like to hear from you as to your reactions to our plans.

Comradely,
Mike

* * * * *

New York, N. Y.
August 24, 1940

Los Angeles Branch, Workers Party,

Dear Comrades:

....1. THE CALIFORNIA ANTI-CONSCRIPTION LEAGUE.

Both the Political Committee and the Plenum discussed the formation by the Los Angeles comrades of the California Committee Against Conscription, as dealt with in your letter of July 30th. This particular effort of the Los Angeles comrades was considered simultaneously with the discussion by the Plenum of the Conscription question generally and specifically. Our attitude on Conscription is dealt with in the resolution of the Plenum on the Political Situation and the War, copies of which are being sent for all members. The decisions of the plenum on the CCAC should keep in mind the resolution of the Plenum. The Plenum decided:

1. To advise the Los Angeles members to continue with the most energetic efforts to expand their anti-conscription organization on a local scale, with special emphasis on trade-union and working class membership, and to advise the Los Angeles Branch and all other Branches of our decision, emphasizing however, that our decision is

confined to Los Angeles as an experiment, the results of which are to be awaited before any other local organization takes the initiative in forming such a movement as has already been done in Los Angeles.

2. That where any kind of substantial anti-conscription movement takes organizational form in other cities, not initiated by us, the club will consider the question of the perspective of our comrades toward this movement without necessarily waiting for the outcome in Los Angeles.

3. The Propaganda of the Anti-Conscription League in Los Angeles shall include not only the anti-democratic character of the Draft Bill, but the fact that the draft is for Wall Street's War, etc.,

4. Special permission is granted to the Los Angeles Party to proceed with the Anti-Conscription League which they have formed. They are instructed to attempt the injection of a more adequate anti-war program, particularly emphasizing our opposition toward Conscription as a measure for Wall Street's War.

Since writing to Los Angeles some time ago (letter of July 30 to Los Angeles), and advising Los Angeles that both questions, in view of their general importance would necessitate the thorough consultation of both the Political Committee and the National Plenum of August 10th, we have not heard concerning the developments or progress of this organization. At that time, it was emphasized that such a movement would not be able to make very much headway unless there was a backing of genuine working-class bodies - trade unions, etc., It is true that there is to be found in the masses a rather huge sentiment against conscription, motivated by all kinds of considerations, pacifist, isolationist, class opposition etc. But trade union organizations do not appear to have taken steps to initiate an anti-conscription movement along genuine working class lines and policy. When an anti-conscription movement does not have this character or foundation, it is very probable that that any movement initiated or developed by individuals or other bodies is likely to receive but incidental support. Quite probably your own efforts have already borne out this general concept, which experience has verified time and again. Has for instance, trade union support, even of one or two unions, actually materialized in the case of the CCAC? We should like to hear.

The motions of the Plenum speak for themselves. In view of the fact that the Los Angeles comrades proceeded to the organization of such a committee (without first consulting the center, as should have been the case), the Plenum decided to permit the Los Angeles comrades to go ahead with their effort, in order to ascertain, among other things, its real base and strength, and as an experiment which could be useful to us all. There were comrades, we may say, who thought it was a mistake to initiate the CCAC in the form that it was organized and thought it would be best to disband the organization at the earliest possible moment. The committee,

however, decided to have the Los Angeles comrades have a try at the development of the CCAC. It goes without saying, that, unless those conducting work in such an organization or movement are clearly aware of the revolutionary position on war, such movements or leagues may easily develop along pacifist directions and the tendency is to hide the chief demands of revolutionary opposition to Capitalist war. Then, too, there are elements who will oppose "peace-time" conscription, while not opposed to conscription once American capitalism enters the war. This of course, is not genuine opposition to capitalist war.

Also, such committees, unless they have a genuine working-class base (trade union, etc.) and when they are composed also of individuals, tend easily to attract dubious elements. Perhaps you have had no difficulty in this respect. We should like to know your experience in this also.

In your communication you advised us that a mass meeting would be held under the auspices of the CCAC. What were the results? Did any organizations participate? What was the character of the audience? What was the attitude expressed by other organizations before and after the meeting?

The Plenum, as well as the Political Committee, was concerned that the CCAC would not prove to be just a front of the W.P. That would have no value, either for the Party or the anti-conscription movement. If such a movement cannot have a genuine working-class base, with real possibilities for mass extension among the workers and working-class organizations, and also even among petty-bourgeois groups, then it is better for our Party to carry on its propaganda on the basis of its own program and revolutionary opposition to the war; and by its efforts perhaps be able to get or to assist other working-class organizations, particularly trade unions, to take the initiative in the formation of an anti-conscription, anti-war movement.

It was the impression of many comrades that the CCAC would prove altogether too narrow at its base to make important progress, and that its energies and resources would be dissipated quickly, whereas the same energies and resources devoted, at this stage, to straight-forward propaganda and activity by the W.P. and Y.P.S.L. would be more fruitful. We wish to be advised as to developments on this score. Perhaps the experience of the comrades with the CCAC has by now been sufficient for you comrades to advise us as to the experiences and efforts. Please let us hear from you at the earliest moment.

In a few localities comrades have issued anti-conscription petitions under another name. Some of these petitions were satisfactory as to their content. In one instance, however, the program around which the committee against conscription was formed is not at all satisfactory. All we would advise and insist upon, is that in such matters the locals should seek the advices of the center. Our experience in various localities along these lines will be dealt with separately. In New York, our anti-conscription and anti-war activity is being carried on in the name of the party, and at this time through the

election campaign work. This strikes us as the best method to adopt at this time; that is, to proceed under Party auspices unless there is a genuine broader base through which an anti-conscription committee or organization can be formed.

We are writing separately on other matters. Please have this communication read to the Branch members, so that they may discuss these questions properly.

Best regards.

Comradely yours,
A.

* * * * *

Los Angeles, Calif.
August 21, 1940

To the Political Committee:

In the opinion of the majority of the L.A. branch, the experiment is now at an end and I can write you the results.

Our original plan was to contact a number of organizations with whom we have contacts for the purpose of establishing a federated organization to be called the California Committee Against Conscription, which would seek to affiliate to it, other organizations especially unions and establish neighborhood branches - in short, to initiate a mass united front movement against conscription.

The first branch meeting to which these plans were presented responded enthusiastically, and a sub-committee was elected to draw up concrete plans for the campaign. The committee met the following day, and after a thorough discussion, we came to the conclusion that our original estimate of the time ahead of us and the possibilities for such an organization initiated by us was exaggerated and decided that a change in our plans was necessary. We felt, first of all, that there was insufficient time before us to allow for the contacting and negotiations with various organizations, the calling of a delegated conference, and the launching of such a united front organization. We felt that, even if we had the connections and the forces with which to do this, the time was too short and before such a project would actually get under way, the conscription bill would have been passed. Secondly, we felt that we had overestimated the intensity and extent of the anti-conscription sentiment and our ability, with the forces we had, to be able to organize it. We, therefore, decided to propose to the Executive Committee a reorientation along the lines of an independent Party and Yipsel campaign, establishing a committee for the purpose of conducting a petition campaign, which we felt would get more support in the name of anti-conscription committee than in the name of the Party, would provide us with a greater number of contacts and into which we could draw certain sympathizers and contacts who might be willing to work for the Party as such.

The Executive Committee, however, disagreed with this proposal,

The Executive Committee, however, disagreed with this proposal, believing that our original plan was feasible, or at least worth trying. It was, therefore, decided by the Executive Committee to establish the California Committee immediately with our own members and sympathizers, conduct a campaign with leaflets, petitions, buttons, etc. in the name of the Committee, to which other organizations would be invited to participate and send speakers. The success or failure of this meeting would determine our future course.

The campaign then began with the calling of the first organizational meeting of the California Committee, which was attended by some 35 people, including about 10 outsiders. At this meeting sub-committees were elected and the plans for the mass meeting made. Stationery, petitions and leaflets were turned off and the work was begun. Virtually all efforts were concentrated on building the mass meeting. A hall was taken which seats 500 people. After the first introductory leaflet of the Committee, which was issued in 5,000 copies, two more leaflets announcing the mass meeting were issued - 5,000 each. Three hundred letters were sent out to individuals, who signed petitions or who had shown some interest in the Committee. Incidentally, 5 letters were received by the Committee from people who responded to the leaflets and wanted information. However, as the mass meeting drew closer, it became more and more apparent that we would not have 500 people, that we would not get support from other organizations and that we would not have outside speakers. While, it is true, we might have been more energetic in contacting organizations, we found that organizations and especially trade unions, are very leary about affiliating to unknown committees, to which no recognized organization is affiliated which has no office, etc. Moreover, the entire work of distributing the leaflets and preparing for the meeting was thrown upon the shoulders of the handful of active, dependable Party members that we have.

One of the results, therefore, was that we were forced for a period of two weeks to virtually abandon independent Party activities, especially the distribution of our press. The night before the mass meeting, G. requested a special Exec. meeting to discuss and decide upon her proposal that there be an official representative from the party on the program of the meeting. The rest of us disagreed with this on the ground that the Party would be the only organization represented and thereby defeat the entire purpose of the Committee; which was to enlist the support and activity of people who would not be willing to work directly with the Party. In addition, there was the problem of what to do in the event of a total failure.

A. and B. sat in on the meeting, as did the Executive Committee of the California Committee, which consisted of all Party members except one, who was not present. In the discussion it developed that A. and B. had principled disagreement with the project, considering it opportunist, pacifist and comparable to Stalinist front organizations, the Keep America Out of War Committee, etc.

However, none of the Executive Committee members shared this opinion. All, with the exception of S., however, did feel that we had miscalculated and had overreached ourselves. . . . About 75 people attended the meeting, including about 30-35 total strangers. . . . The meeting went off smoothly enough. The discussion from the floor was begun by a member of the "Constitutional Progressives" whose stronghold appears to be Pershing Square (our Union Square), and developed into a forum. The S.P. had someone there to give their line on conscription, and then I took the floor, and spoke about 25 minutes from the platform as a representative of the W.P. giving our full revolutionary stand. Under the circumstances, I think that a forum was the best possible form the meeting could take, since it was obvious that the so-called "California Committee" had no resources or mass support, and did not look to it as the movement which would stop conscription. This is why I felt it necessary to use this opportunity to present at some length the full Party program on conscription and war. The speech was well received by the audience. However, a number of the comrades thought that I had made a mistake, believing that I should have limited myself to a few remarks from the floor to the effect that the Party supports the "Cal. Comm." etc. About a dozen interest blanks (to the Cal. Comm.) were handed in and back issues of Labor Action were distributed after the meeting.

On Sunday night the Exec. Comm. met to discuss perspective, specifically what to do with Cal. Comm. Two points of view developed at the meeting. I introduced a motion, the essence of which was to abandon the perspective of building the Cal. Comm. as an organization and to reorient our anti-conscription campaign to one conducted independently by the Party and the League, maintain a small committee consisting of a few party comrades and those outsiders who had indicated a desire to work with the committee whose main function would be the conducting of a petition campaign. The purpose of this is to provide some means of holding on to the contacts we had made and give us a chance to bring them closer to the party. I also included in my motion a proposal that the Party in its own name attempt, wherever feasible, to engage in united front activities with other organizations who were on record against conscription, and to attempt fraction work in already existing anti-conscription organizations. A counter motion introduced by S. and W. called for the continuation of our perspective, to conduct the campaign through, and to build the CCAC.

My point of view is, that while it was entirely legitimate for the Party to have attempted this experiment, it is necessary for us to be able to recognize when an experiment is a failure and on that basis to change our course. To continue in the futile attempt to build a stooge committee would have only one result and that would be a serious slackening of our independent party work. Our forces are too small to be in a position to move masses or to compete with the powerful Stalinist apparatus in the building of a mass anti-conscription "innocent" organization which might serve as a forum for the Party. The experience proved that even under the pseudonym of the Cal. Comm., our activities were limited exclusively to propaganda issued in the name of our

This being the case it is infinitely more valuable to have this propaganda issued in the name of our Party than in the name of some "Committee. I have the feeling that the comrades who insisted on persisting in this vain venture, talking in terms of "breaking out of our isolation" and "mingling with the masses" are a little panicky because of our obvious and growing isolation and are looking for impossible shortcuts.

Rather than to attempt to elaborate on their (others!) views, I will ask them to formulate them and send them to you. Meanwhile the branch has taken a decision. My motion represented a majority of the Exec. Comm.

Comradely,

Mike

* * * * *

New York, N. Y.
Sept. 7, 1940

Los Angeles Branch, W. P.

Dear Mike:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of August 21st, together with your attached follow-up at the same time of your letter of August 26th, and yesterday your letter of September 4th. Apparently there is no important difference of opinion, now, between the Center and the Los Angeles comrades as to what should be done with the CCAC. Your August 21st letter indicated that there was a division of opinion as to the next course with the CCAC, in view of your experiences; but your Sept. 4th letter indicates common accord.

It would appear that there is not much to add to our letter of Aug. 24th in which we pointed out the manner in which any anti-conscription movement would have to develop, if it were to prove to be a genuine movement, embracing organized workers, or at least considerable numbers of workers in any event. Your detailed report of experiences is very illuminating. It would be a mistake to pretend further that there was any possibility of genuine growth now of the CCAC, in view of the fact that it was not possible to get the support of any trade union or similar bodies. The Plenum, as you know, decided to let the Los Angeles comrades proceed with the experiment for the lessons it might bring to our movement generally, rather than to advise the comrades to scrap the CCAC immediately, because prospects, based on experience over a period of years, were that the CCAC would not grow. Now the comrades have learned by their own experience. The Political Committee is opposed to the continuation

of a perspective aimed to conduct the Anti-Conscription campaign through, not to build, the CCAC. That would be playing around with an important issue. There is no justification for it. The comrades went through an experiment, with the consent of the Political Committee. It did not work out as everyone hoped it would.

We indicated in our previous letter that, in almost every instance of this kind at this period, it would have proved more fruitful for the Party to conduct its campaign independently, with its own propaganda and program; and on the basis thereof it would be seen whether a broader base for an anti-conscription movement could be developed. This now seems to be demonstrated to all concerned; and for whatever period of time remains during which anti-conscription activities can be carried on, the Political Committee proposes that it be conducted by the Party and YPSL in its own name.

The Political Committee at its meeting yesterday, proposed:

1. That our comrades proceed to the immediate liquidation of the CCAC.
2. That the Anti-Conscription activity be reoriented around an independent Party and YPSL campaign.

Various tasks can still be carried on, including petition activity against conscription, but primarily our efforts should be directed now toward the elucidation of our fundamental position on war, in which Labor Action, The New International and our pamphlets receive the major attention, rather than incidental and very transitory local literature of any kind.

It appears clear from all your reports that it was almost exclusively Party and YPSL members who had to carry out tasks connected with this work.

The role of the Party might just as well be openly established, and whatever benefits there are to be obtained from the efforts in the past weeks, should accrue to the party. With the manner in which you comrades proposed to wind up the CCAC, the committee is in essential accord.

Everyone among us desires to reach wider contacts, But this is a period in which the stream is more heavily than ever against the revolutionary movement. There are no short-cuts, particularly now, to the masses. The major task at present is the ideological consolidation of our Party and youth forces, and as many as possible of sympathizers and those coming closer to our movement. The pressure is very heavy and it is easy (and also easy to understand) to yield to pressure and to proposals which presumably aim at getting out of isolation; but particularly on the war question is it impossible for us to water down our program; likewise; organizationally it is very easy to see in all kinds of organizational setups, a way to present our program to wider forces. This particular experiment has now given whatever lessons it can and the activities have to be reorien-

ted. Other opportunities for the wider propagation of our views through the medium of the Party and through other organizational medium will show themselves in the future.

We are in accord, in the main, with the procedure your September 4th letter outlined for winding up the CCAC.

Comradely yours,

A.

Los Angeles, Cal.
September 4, 1940

To the P.C.:

Received your two letters of the 24th, also of the 28th and 29th. In answer to your letter of the 24th-

1. The California Anti-Conscription Committee -- before the receipt of your communication, dealing with this matter, I had already written you in some detail about our experiences and our decision to abandon the attempt to build an independent anti-conscription organization. I presume you have received this communication. We are calling a meeting this Friday of the "California Committee" to wind up its existence. That is, we are calling together the various contacts that the committee made in the course of its existence through interest blanks, etc., and the party members, to an organizational meeting of the committee, to which a report will be given of its work, the results of the mass meeting, financial report, and the statement as to why this committee is disbanding. The main purpose of the meeting is to give a full party position to these few contacts that were made, and to try to bring them closer to the party. In short, it will in effect be a party educational meeting on conscription..... In the course of the discussion on the national situation and perspectives of conscription I am scheduled to state the revolutionary position on war, the role of the Workers Party, urge all to read our literature, etc..

Comradely yours,

Mike

LETTER OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO THE AKRON COMRADES
IN REGARD TO THEIR ANTI*CONSCRIPTION ACTIVITY.

New York, N.Y.
August 30, 1940

Akron Branch,
Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

We presume that you have received our communication of August 27th, which concerns itself with the decisions of the Plenum on the Akron situation. We hope that steps have been taken to carry out the decisions of the Plenum. Until we hear on the actions of the Akron comrades apropos the Plenum decisions, we shall address communications for all the comrades through the previous channels. The matter dealt with below concerns all the comrades and should receive the consideration of the comrades, either generally or in their respective branches if the latter have already been formed as per the Plenum decision.

We have in our possession - 1. A petition distributed by the "Committee to Fight Conscription", and
2. "The Program for Action of the Committee to Fight Conscription."

Upon a careful reading of the contents, we feel it is imperative to advise the Akron comrades of our opinion and attitude toward the program on conscription because, we understand, it is Akron comrades who have sponsored this committee and presumably are its main base. We do not know if this program has been sponsored by the Akron Branch itself.* In a postscript to our letter of the 27th, we expressed ourselves briefly on this program.

It is incomprehensible to us how any comrade who is conversant with the position of our Party on the basic question of war, can in any way give support to, or sponsor a committee on the basis of the Program for Action outlined thereon.

First, may we say that we advised all Party Branches long ago that any local Party Unit which had in mind the formation of such a committee or such a movement, must first consult with the National Office to receive its opinions and advice. In view of the fact that any action or activity on the war question is so relevant to the life and future of the Party, the National Office decided that locals must consult with the National Office on such matters. So we must regret the action of the comrades responsible for forming this committee, the more so because the Program for Action is indefensible.

* The National Office learned shortly thereafter that this program was not the work of the Branch, but of a minority group which has set up a separate branch. Editor.

We cite at this time some of the more glaring statements in the program:

1. The committee states that it proposes to conduct a "Non-Political" campaign against conscription.

How is such a thing possible? A fight against conscription (in any form) is a political fight, particularly since it must be directed against the political machinery or government of the ruling class; and in this case against the program of the central government in Washington.

2. The program states: "The conscription bill is defensible only on the basis of a war its proponents intend to wage on foreign soil". This flies in the face of our fundamental outlook on the Imperialist war. We are against imperialist war, whether it is fought on so-called foreign soil or on so-called domestic soil. In either event, it is a war conducted against the interests of the Working class. As such we can give it no political or material support. The conditions under which labor can support or take part in war, with its own conscience and will, have been made clear at all times by our organization. Namely, that the workers are defending their own interests, either in civil war against the Bourgeois ruling class; or give conditional support, material aid without political support, as in the case of the Civil War in Spain, the war between China and Japan, etc....

The above mentioned sentence in the program apparently draws a distinction between an imperialist war waged on foreign soil and on this soil.

3. One paragraph is headed: "Death of Democracy" and refers to the destruction of "traditional liberties by the establishment of the peace-time draft." Conscription per se is not the cause of the death of democracy, but rather the stultification and strangulation of bourgeois democracy is the result of a process flowing from the nature of the entire imperialist struggle on a national and international scale. This paragraph is so written as to imply that with the establishment of conscription, the United States thereby becomes totalitarian. Possibly this is not the intention of the leaflet; but even more important is the emphasis placed on the preservation of the democratic institutions of American Capitalism as virtually the major objective of the people.
4. The Program goes on to join Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini together, without in any way drawing any distinctions politically between them; and moreover, by indicating that unemployed and youth problems are identical under these regimes. This, at best, is a confusion of ideas and ideologies that must not prevail in our movement.

In three lines the reasons for the French defeat are presumably summed up. The summing up implies, if it does not actually say so, that National Defense of the bourgeois order by the working class is conceivable under conditions which, however, are not specified. What else can the following sentence mean? "The passage of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill can only serve to foster general and deep distrust toward the democratic intentions of our elected officials."

5. The last important matter we wish to point out is the strange concluding slogan of the Program for Action: "The CFC calls for National Defense against dictatorship at home." What does this mean? There are several meanings or interpretations, but slogans must be clear in themselves and don't require any particular elaboration. It can easily follow from the Program For Action as a whole, and particularly from the quotations we have made from it, that the supporters of this committee to fight conscription believe in National Defense by the workers even under the given capitalist conditions. For our part, that is not possible.

The Program for Action as a whole impresses us as incomplete and inaccurate in its characterization of the present Imperialist war; does not make clear that the working class is opposed to the conscription act, whether the armed forces are to be sent abroad or not, and so forth. The social-patriotic formulations and implications will no doubt be obvious to all the comrades when they note the quotations and read the program as a whole.

We have taken note of the publicity given to this committee by the Summit County Labor News, and have also read some of the Akron newspapers as well, in order to see what could possibly have been the ground for the formation of such a committee. We have noted that in Akron there is formed a Peace Council, which differs very little from the Committee to Fight Conscription.

Also, a similar committee, we observe, was formed by the Akron Industrial Union Council. What political or organization justification for the formation of this particular body on the basis of the Program of Action adopted by it?

On such an important matter, we had hoped that whoever was responsible for the organization of this committee and the adoption of its program of action would first have advised the National Office of its intention and failing that, to have advised the National Office of its actions and activities once it had gone ahead nevertheless. We presume we shall hear from the comrades in reply to this communication. From the foregoing it is clear that we cannot endorse or support a movement on such a basis. It could only serve to discredit the revolutionary elements, whose struggle on the war question must lie in the strict adherence to their principled position on war, and must therefore carry out their activity on that basis. This would mean that, rather than encourage or initiate movements which have but little likelihood for development in the present circumstances and which water down our program, it is better for the Workers Party and YFJB to carry out an independent anti-war activity on the basis of its basic program.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Comradely yours,

A.