

# FORUM

*A Discussion and Information  
Bulletin Published by the  
Independent Socialist League*

## Contents

RESOLUTION ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES Draft Resolution of the Political Committee for the Third National Convention of the ISL.	P. 1
AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION By PC Minority: Shachtman-Gates-Haskell.	P. 23
SHOULD THE BOLSHEVIKS HAVE SURRENDERED STATE POWER? A Discussion Article, by.....James Thompson	P. 24

*Price*

Fifteen Cents

*Date*

May, 1954

2593

RESOLUTION ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE  
UNITED STATES

(Draft Resolution of the Political Committee for the Third Nat'l)  
(Convention of the ISL, 1954.)

We are now entering the 10th year since World War II. The 9 years which lie behind us have been years of unparalleled prosperity and social peace. They have been purchased at the expense of death on the mountain ranges of Korea and of massive preparations for a global atomic war. An armament economy, a vast government expenditure on armaments both at home and for America's allies sustained all types of economic activity in this country at record levels. They have been the golden age of the Permanent War Economy in America.

The Permanent War Economy continues; all the key social and economic questions are decisively determined by course of the imperialist antagonisms and the preparations for war. But the rate of armament production is not arbitrarily expandable. It is determined by political factors. The cold war does not continue forever at the same pitch of intensity. The past year, for instance, has been a period of relative lull in the cold war, the so-called detente. Developments on a world scale, both sides seeking a temporary respite from the demands of war preparations, tended toward a reduction in armaments or at least their maintenance at something approximating present levels. Far from ending the Permanent War Economy, the impact of this reduction has demonstrated that the economy of the United States is inseparably linked to the course of war production. The imperialist antagonisms continually pose the immediate threat of war, limited or world-wide, a threat which lurks in the basic nature of the present world crisis. The graph of war production in the Permanent War Economy will rise and fall. The experiences of the past months illuminate some of the social problems of American capitalism in just such a period of lull. We address ourselves to them without forgetting that threat of war, limited or world-wide, looms in the very nature of the contemporary world crisis and can break through suddenly any temporary lull.

The resolution "Social Forces and Politics in the United States" adopted by the Independent Socialist League at its last convention, in 1951, did not address itself to the problems cast up by such a lull. It was drafted and passed in the first year of the Korean war, and was heavily influenced by the enormous expansion of the war sector of the economy which was then under way. Both economic and political developments have travelled in the direction described in that resolution, but they have not travelled as fast or as far as we then thought they would.

The "golden age" of the Permanent War Economy has been a period in which production for war was just sufficient to maintain a continual mild inflation, without being so overwhelming as to force the strait-jacketing of the civilian economy. Such is the expansive capacity of our advanced industrial technology that it was possible for the government to divert over \$50 billions a year from the civilian economy without significantly impairing its operation and growth.

But the stabilization of the military sector, for whatever reasons, soon confronts the capitalist economy with a series of problems different from those created by its continual expansion. The military sector remains as an enormous pillar which supports the whole structure and insures it against the kind of major collapse it suffered in 1930. But around and above this pillar a vast superstructure has been slapped together which begins to sag of its own weight. The prosperity of the past two years has depended as much on the continued growth of the civilian superstructure as it has on the expansion of the military sector itself. When the latter is stabilized, the civilian sector is deprived of the dynamic principle essential to its uninterrupted expansion. The whole economy tends to be stabilized, to achieve a state of "normalcy" at a new level. This is the uneasy "normalcy" peculiar to a period of lull in the expansion of the war economy. All political and social tendencies and movements are compelled to take its impact into account.

The political mood in the country which has accompanied the prosperity of the past nine years has been one of growing conservatism. This has affected all classes and strata of the population. It resulted in ending the 20 years of Democratic rule at a moment when the country was at the top of its prosperity, and bringing the Republicans to power to preside over the liquidation of the boom which had put them there.

But this conservatism in America has been of a peculiarly uneasy, frustrated type. It has shown none of the calm self-confidence which has been associated with the Victorian era in Britain, or even with the more brawling period of the rise of American capitalism.

Liberal and conservative ideologists alike have sought to spread the conviction among the masses that American capitalism is a unique social system which is guaranteed to expand permanently and to assure an ever rising standard of living for all. But all their arguments and statistics, all the techniques of the public relations experts, those uniquely American ideological hucksters, have failed to exorcize the twin fears of depression and war.

Despite the brave talk about ever-expanding prosperity, the American people have an uneasy feeling that their prosperity is a function of the war economy. They know that the war economy can only be justified by the existence of Stalinism in general, and of Russian Stalinist imperialism in particular. But the expansionist drive of this imperialism is uneven. It thrusts forward or pauses to consolidate its gains, depending on its opportunities, internal difficulties and the resistance it meets both at home and abroad. So far, however, it has retained the initiative in the cold war.

Hence the internal dilemma of American capitalism, and of

the ruling class which directs its policies: Prosperity and social peace can be assured in the long run only by the constant expansion of military expenditures at home and abroad. But these expenditures have neither led to an immediate war, nor to a political defeat of Stalinism on a world scale. The failure of its grand strategy under both Democratic and Republican administrations has led to serious rifts within the capitalist class itself.

The return of the Republican Party to power after 20 years in opposition was a result of the general rightward drift in American politics mentioned above. This drift, which has been created by the armament prosperity and the fear of world Stalinism on the one hand, and the inability of the Fair Dealers and their labor supporters to offer anything but a warmed-over repetition of their old programs on the other, has been given a further boost by the Eisenhower administration.

In power, the Republican Party has exhibited the predictable and predicted political and economic orientation of the dominant section of the American capitalist class. While continuing to administer all the institutions of the "welfare state" inherited from the Democrats, its main concern and emphasis has been to cut the budget, reduce taxes for the rich, and turn over to private business (under an umbrella of government guarantees against any possible losses) every economic resource and program which it possibly could.

As the first months of Republican rule happened to coincide with the top of the armament boom, this policy met with no serious political resistance in the country. But it is inevitable that insofar as the economy softens in its phase of transition to the new level indicated above, disputes will arise within the Republican party as well as in the nation as a whole on the further course of economic and social policy.

In the agricultural areas the battle has already been joined over the issue of parity. As unemployment reaches the new, "normal" levels for this economic phase, the problem of what to do about its relief, let alone its cure, will have to be faced. A revival of the social and political militancy of the workers which may be expected to follow a protracted operation of the economy at less than full-employment levels will once again raise the question of a "hard" or "soft" policy toward the trade unions and other workers' organizations in sharp form.

One of the most striking facts about the Republican administration is that the ruling party has been engaged in an internal struggle from the day it took office. Long before the party was forced to face these domestic issues in the acute form which they will assume in the future, it has divided into two openly warring factions. The illusion

that Eisenhower could unify the country has quickly given way to the realization that it is quite beyond him to unify his own party, or even to keep its conflicts within manageable bounds.

The chief source of the division lies in the realm of foreign policy. It represents the different perspectives adopted by different sections of the ruling class over how to fight the cold war and how to wield America's new position of hegemony in the capitalist world. It is a reflection of the tendency, in this era of world political crisis, for global issues to dominate other aspects of national life.

The division in the Republican Party is far from having congealed into hard factional form. The lines shift from issue to issue, with the bulk of the party representation in Congress, and of their active backers and supporters in the country shifting with what appear to be the exigencies of the moment.

Despite this confusion and ambiguity, it is clear that there exists a hard and powerful core of Republican politicians who are generally dissatisfied with the conservative course of the Eisenhower leadership and are determined to shift it radically to the right. They are, generally, for the "go it alone" policy in foreign affairs. That is, they stand for the most brutal application of American economic and political pressure on the rest of the capitalist world. In the starkest terms of its ultimate political logic, they lean to a preventive war against Stalinism.

Their approach to domestic policy tends, in general, to be equally reactionary, though in this sphere they have been united chiefly, to date, in a virulent campaign against all shades of liberal and radical opinion under the banner of "fighting Communism." Although there is no one-to-one correspondence between the advocacy of a "hard" policy toward the allies abroad and the working class at home, the hard core of Republican reaction tends to have a common leaning, at the very least, on both questions.

The conservative mood in the country has favored the extreme right wing of the Republican Party. Although still a minority, it is powerful, self-confident and aggressive. At the moment, there is no other political force, except perhaps the Dixiecrats, in the country at large, let alone in the Republican Party, which can equal its cohesiveness, drive and self-confidence. The result is that it is this political tendency which has had the initiative, has set the political tone, and to which all other political groupings have been forced to adapt themselves in one degree or another.

The Eisenhower leadership in the party has yielded to the reactionary right on one issue after another in the inter-

est of party unity. Goaded to desperation by the political offensive of "McCarthyism," it has sought to beat the Senator from Wisconsin at his own game by extending the witchhunt to include a former president of the United States in the category of conscious abetment of espionage. In foreign affairs its freedom of maneuver is hampered by the knowledge that any normalization of relations with Stalinist governments, however essential this may be from the standpoint of American relations with its allies, will be denounced at home as "appeasement."

The Democratic Party is incapable of presenting a firm and effective counterpoise to the reactionary right. The bulk of the Democratic Congressional representation conceals its secret sympathy with the right, or at the very least its lack of an alternative to its policies, under the tactical slogan of "let the Republicans kill each other off." The Fair Deal wing of the party is weak in Congress, and lacks cohesion as well as any clear-cut program, or even a sense of mission in the country as a whole.

In the realm of foreign affairs, the Democrats are reduced to giving docile support to what is, in the main, a continuation of the policies of their own past administration. At most they can snipe at this or that detail of execution by Dulles. They are equally impotent on the home front. The Dixie-GOP coalition which dominated Congress on domestic issues during Truman's last term reflected the social thought and interests of the Southern Democratic leadership which is even more powerful in opposition than it was when the party was in power.

This section of the party is predisposed to high price supports for agriculture, and to somewhat lower tariffs on industrial goods. It is less concerned about budgetary deficits than are the Republicans, and tends toward a more far-reaching program of public conservation and development of natural resources. But these differences do not amount to a serious alternative social policy. It is significant that the chief outcry from Democratic ranks has been against the Republican reduction of military expenditures. They know in their hearts that the secret of Democratic prosperity lay in massive military budgets, and nowhere else.

The Fair Deal wing of the Democratic party has exhibited a continuation of the decline in self-confidence, morale and cohesion which marked it during the last Truman administration. The titular leader of the party, hailed by the liberals as their saviour during the 1952 elections, has indicated that his chief concern is a re-cementing of the ties which held the New Deal coalition bound to the Solid South. Individual members of their weak Congressional contingent have raised their voices in warning against this or that aspect of Republican policy. But they have failed to unite as a cohesive bloc in Congress to offer an alternative program to the American people. By and large, they have accepted the strategy of their party leadership of self-effacement and non-involvement in the main political struggle of the day.

If the country is in for a considerable period of economic stagnation, even at a fairly high level of activity, the social problem at home will tend to assume a degree of political importance which it lacked during the rising phase of the armament boom. With the issues of unemployment, a falling standard of living and a farm crisis demanding attention, the Republican Party, especially its right wing, will find it more difficult to convince the people that their domestic troubles have been brought about by the infiltration of Stalinists into the government. The Democratic Party can be expected to gain in influence and perhaps win control of Congress in the 1954 Congressional elections. At the same time, those factors which militate toward a strengthening of the right wing inside the Republican Party and the anti-New Deal sections of society will continue in force. That is, it is quite possible to envisage an increase in support for the Democratic party and at the same time the emergence of a stronger Republican right wing, even of its capture in time of that party.

The Eisenhower administration has satisfied no one. It has succeeded in irritating the liberal-labor left wing without fully meeting the demands of the conservative right. Its victory in 1952 came as the end result of an accumulation of amorphous dissatisfaction with the continuance of Democratic rule. Backward, conservative, and politically inexperienced sections of the population expressed their resentment against the Korean war, against high taxes, high prices, and corruption in government by striking out aimlessly against the Democratic Party in power. The Eisenhower-Dewey, so-called liberal Republican wing, understood its mandate to be for the continuance of the basic reforms of the New Deal era with a bent toward conservatism and "business in government" in domestic policy and continuance of the Truman line in foreign policy. The right wing thought it had received a green light for an all-out crusade against "Communism," broadly interpreted to include New Dealism at home and socialism abroad. But both had miscalculated.

Those who put the Republican Party back in power had in no sense repudiated the social policies of the New Deal. They were demanding the soothing of vague dissatisfactions and put into office a party, none of whose tendencies was capable of satisfying them. Now, the decline in armament production and the rise of unemployment underlines the utter inability of the Republican Party to face the problems of the day.

The Democratic Party, nationally still considered the party of the New Deal, despite the fact that its own conservative right wing holds control in Congress, maintained the bulk of its supporters in line even while suffering defeat in 1952. Now the bankruptcy of the Republican Party, in domestic as well as foreign policy, can only have as its immediate result a restoration of confidence in the Democratic Party. If it should capture control of Congress in 1954, it will have gained in strength; but the Republican Party will still have responsibility, in the eyes of the people, for the

national administration. Consequently, it may take a number of years, probably until after the presidential elections of 1956, for the party to be tested once again. But a Democratic victory in 1956 would not usher in a genuine leftward swing in the country unless the labor movement intervened in a more decisive way as an independent force. The Democratic victory would come, in part, as a result of another futile lashing out at the party which has born major political responsibility for the preceding failures. Such an administration would, in all likelihood, be even further to the right politically than was the last Truman government.

The crisis inside the Republican Party which has erupted in full public view can hardly be settled amicably, especially if the internal crisis occurs in the midst of a decline in its popular support. The right wing, far from displaying any tendency toward a demagogic social program, inclines toward the most conservative, pro-business policy. This is one of the things which clearly distinguishes it from a fascist tendency. Its inability to appeal to the popular demand for action on behalf of the people in the economic recession limits its ability to counter the growing influence of the Democratic Party.

But the utter bankruptcy of Eisenhower's foreign policy gives the Republican right the possibility of capitalizing upon his failure to offer any alternative to Truman-Acheson. The latest international debacle of the administration in the face of the Indo-China crisis will tend to raise the morale and self-confidence of the Democratic opposition and help it to rally the liberal, leftward thinking sections of the population. But it will be the Republican right wing, and not the Dewey-Eisenhower faction, which will begin to mobilize the conservative strata. Thus, inside the Republican Party, among those who seek an alternative to twenty years of New Dealism, the right wing can be strengthened even while the Democratic Party is strengthened even while the Democratic Party is strengthened in the nation as a whole.

It is worthwhile to indicate some of the factors that can contribute to such a strengthening of the Republican right.

Even a relatively slight economic decline in this country is likely to have the most serious repercussions abroad. The economies of France, Britain, West Germany, as well as the raw-material producing countries in Asia and Latin America are in a far more precarious position than that of the United States. The cry of "trade, not aid" expresses the deepest needs of their economies and is essential to the retention of even the degree of political stability which they have succeeded in establishing since the last war. A steep decline in the economies of the rest of the capitalist countries which had been triggered off by a lesser decline in the United States would tend to increase the tensions within the capitalist world, and to widen the rifts which already exist between the United States and her allies.



The pressure for trade with the Stalinist world and for political agreements which would open up such trade to the maximum would become virtually irresistible. Political movements hostile to the United States, whether they be of the Stalinist or nationalist varieties, would be strengthened at the expense of the "pro-American" tendencies. The whole structure of American cold-war policy as it was conceived by Truman and Acheson and even as it is being executed by Eisenhower and Dulles, would reveal its basic and ineradicable weakness. This, the foreign aspect of American economic recession, could be grist to the political mill of the extreme right wing of the Republican Party. They are the only powerful group in American politics whose line has been consistently hostile to or critical of the European alliance, and the vast economic expenditures by which it has been kept alive. In time, their "go-it-alone" tendency (that peculiar mixture of opposing the alliance in Europe while advocating the most extreme measures against Stalinism in Asia) could receive a new boost in popular acceptance by the decline of American influence abroad. The hysterical fears of Stalinism both domestic and foreign, the latest tendencies to xenophobia and chauvinism exacerbated by the frustrations of the failure of American foreign policy would be exploited by them to the maximum.

In sum, all the tendencies toward an economic chauvinism and a struggle for the world market that thrust through during periods of economic stagnation will facilitate the task of the Republican right.

A bid for power, or even a victory, by the extreme right wing inside the Republican Party would, under such circumstances, put a powerful strain on the loose alliance which is the Democratic Party. The party as a whole, and its various components, would be forced to make an "agonized reappraisal" of their own political positions, both at home and abroad. This is especially true because the Democratic Party, if returned to power, would be burdened with renewed responsibility without gaining the ability to solve any of the big problems of the day.

On the domestic scene, the labor movement will be seeking a revival of New Dealism to lessen the impact of the economic decline on the working class. For this it will look to the Democratic Party, as in the past. Yet even a Democratic victory at the polls in 1954, unless it assumes landslide proportions all over the country, can only return them to a Dixiecrat-GOP majority in Congress, but this time with Eisenhower in the White House and General Motors running the administration.

Thus, in the realm of economic and social policy at home, labor can expect little satisfaction from its policy of supporting the Democrats for at least two years. Its hostility to the Dixiecrats, that is, to a powerful and essential part of the Democratic Party, can only be increased by a Democratic victory. And the policy of conciliation

of the Dixiecrats which will most likely be followed by the bulk of the remaining Democratic leaders can only increase friction between themselves and the labor movement.

On foreign policy, the leadership of the labor movement will face an excruciating dilemma. They have supported the basic outlines of American cold-war policy throughout. Its virtual collapse abroad would find them compromised along with all other sections of American politics except the reactionary Republicans on the extreme right and the tiny group of supporters of the Third Camp on the left.

A rise of the extreme right wing of the Republican Party would signalize the greatest danger to democracy at home and a vastly increased danger of war. It will demand as it has in the past, the most extreme curbs on the labor movement, measures which threaten the ability of the unions to hold out against the big monopolies. From the Democratic Party labor will be demanding measures to protect the standard of living of the working class. Above all, it will seek to defend itself from the threat of the right wing. In fact, the labor movement, which has remained tied to its policy of supporting the Democratic Party through all the years of complaining, can be compelled to reorient its political line because of the menace of the right.

As the right wing grows inside the Republican Party and labor demands protection from it and a program of renewed social reform, a tendency toward a polarization of American politics is possible under the impact and initiative of the right. The labor movement cannot create an effective barrier to the Republican right as long as it remains tied to the Democratic Party.

The election of a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress in 1954 would represent a temporary and relatively weak leftward oscillation in the general rightward drift of American politics. This drift can be expected to continue, not as an uninterrupted movement proceeding with a uniform velocity, but as the main trend of American politics until it meets a counter-force in the form of the break-away of labor from the shackles which bind it to the Democratic Party. Such a break can come as a defensive reaction to the increased power of the Republican right and the accommodation of the major section of the Democratic Party to it, or as a result of a general rise of labor militancy, or most likely of all, as a combination of the two. It is impossible to predict exactly what combination of events and trends in American politics will bring about this break, or how far it lies ahead of us. But to believe that it will not occur is to believe that this country and this working class are exempt from the laws of the class struggle. An effective response of the American working class to the reactionary drive lies in the future. The past and present failure of the labor movement to take the political initiative has resulted in the strengthening of its enemies and hence in the development of conditions which tend to undermine the position of the labor movement itself. In no field is this more obvious or more damaging to democracy and hence, in the long run, to the working class in America, than in the field of civil liberties.

The Assault on Civil Liberties in the U. S.

The political atmosphere in the United States is dominated by a far-ranging and deep-going assault on democracy, on all aspects of liberal and radical ideology, and on the institutions, organizations and individuals which are its bearers. That this is the fundamental meaning of the "witch-hunt" should in no way be obscured by the fact that its chief attack has been centered on the Stalinist movement and that it derives both its rationale and its mass support from the real menace of the spread of Stalinism on a global scale.

The witchhunt represents a massive intensification and extension of a policy which has always been advocated by a section of the capitalist class and its political spokesmen. The Hearst press, the Peglers, and the American Legion have always regarded radical ideas and organizations as the proper objects of police repression. They have always lumped together Stalinists, socialists, militant trade unionists and liberal "pinkos" as birds of a feather to be treated with the same medicine. This view has been shared for at least two decades by none other than J. Edgar Hoover, head of the American secret political police.

The acceptance of the theory and practice of the most reactionary section of the bourgeoisie in this field by the overwhelming majority of the leaders of both major political parties is a product of the radical shift to the right in American politics, and creates the condition for its further development in the same direction.

The fundamental cause of this shift is the inability of American policy, which is to say, the inability of capitalism on a world scale, to deal successfully with Stalinism as a social movement. The revolutionary anti-capitalist ideology of Stalinism continues to attract the masses in those countries where no progressive social alternative is offered them. Capitalism, and particularly American capitalism, stands as an obstacle to self determination for the colonial peoples, and tends to block, or to support the social groupings which block the workers in their struggle for greater economic equality, security and well-being in the advanced countries.

Despite the tremendous outpouring of military and economic aid to the senile capitalist regimes throughout the world, the United States has been unable to crush Stalinism as a world social movement. Even in those countries where its progress has been held in check, it remains as an ever-present menace to the consolidation and stabilization of capitalism in general, and to the successful execution of American capitalist policy in particular.

- 11 -

It is inevitable that all supporters of American capitalism and its foreign policy, whether they be critical or wholehearted supporters, should seek some explanation for the continued social drive and appeal of Stalinism. They cannot accept the simple truth: that this barbaric, totalitarian movement for the overthrow of capitalism derives its strength from the decay of the system itself. Even when the glimmerings of this truth break through to the most intelligent and sensitive supporters of the system, they appear in the form of recognizing the need for some degree of social reforms abroad, for more economic aid to bolster foreign capitalism and soften its harshest features, rather than in the realization that nothing but its abolition by a progressive, democratic movement can really inflict a decisive defeat on world Stalinism.

Unable to accept the truth about the relationship between the decline of capitalism and the growth of Stalinism, virtually all sectors of American capitalist opinion have turned to the easy notion that Stalinism derives its total strength from certain of its organization features. To them, Stalinism is simply a conspiracy. Its strength derives from its apparatus of espionage and infiltration into capitalist governments and social institutions. Thus, a powerful auxiliary aspect of the movement is seen as the whole. Thus, the chief weapon in the struggle against it is seen in the secret police, the agencies of counter-espionage, and in "smoking out" its secret adherents in the government, the unions, the schools, the arts and professions, in short, in all areas of capitalist society.

The definition of Stalinism as simply a conspiracy may serve well enough to whip the ignorant into a hysterical state in which any measure proposed for the isolation and destruction of the enemy becomes acceptable. But as the real Stalinist movement in this world is far broader than its conspiratorial section, and as its strength derives far more from the appeal of its ideas in a decaying capitalism than from the cleverness of its secret operatives, the government, and the pro-capitalist enemies of Stalinism in general were caught in a dilemma.

Should they concentrate their anti-Stalinist struggle against the few actual spies and infiltrators, or should they seek to suppress the political movement and its ideas? For them, the dilemma was quickly resolved. They would telescope the task. Every advocate of Stalinist ideas would be treated as a conspirator, and, if possible, as a criminal conspirator.

This view was accepted by the Roosevelt administration when it adopted the Smith Act which makes the advocacy of revolutionary ideas rather than espionage, infiltration of the government service or the commission of any overt revolutionary act the object of legal repression. It should have been fair warning to the liberals when not Stalinists but the leaders and militants of the Socialist

Workers Party and the Minneapolis teamsters union became its first victims.

This view was at the root of the federal "loyalty" program instituted by Truman with the attorney general's infamous "list of subversive organizations" as its chief instrument of identification and persecution. It was the foundation of the McCarran internal security act which combined the most onerous features of seeking to illegalize the Stalinist movement with the provision of concentration camps, in a time of "emergency", for suspects of possible political criminal activity. It lies at the root, also, of those aspects of the McCarran immigration act which endanger the security of resident aliens and naturalized citizens, and prohibit entry into the country of foreigners who may, at any time, have been members of Stalinist or revolutionary political movements here or abroad.

The legal assault of the federal government and its agencies on civil liberties has been merely the apex and end-product of the witchhunt which has engulfed the country. State laws of the most brutal and patently unconstitutional character have been passed. Every reactionary organization, every super-American crackpot has been given free license to blacklist, blackmail, hound and persecute the Stalinists, Stalinoids, genuine socialists, radicals and even liberals throughout the land. It was inevitable that in this atmosphere, after this massive preparation of the public consciousness in which both major parties and the most respected leaders of public opinion in the country have participated, there should arise an individual or a movement who could build on all that had gone before, and weld it into an instrument for his or its special purposes. McCarthy and McCarthyism as the result.

McCarthyism

Three features, among others, distinguish McCarthyism from the more standard and widely-accepted varieties of witchhunting, on the one hand, and from the bulk of the right wing of the Republican Party on the other. First is the complete lack of inhibition in the choice of methods, the open contempt for the truth, the irresponsible resort to the most vicious type of demagoguery. Second is the conscious broadening of the object of attack to include every variety of political opinion beyond the confines of the extreme right wing of American politics. Third is the use of the witchhunt as a vehicle for attaining political power, as an instrument with which to belabor all individuals and political groupings which do not align themselves with and actively support the clique around the junior Senator from Wisconsin.

The mechanics of the McCarthyite attack as relatively simple. Once the conspiratorial aspect of Stalinism has been identified and accepted as its fundamental character-

istic, once the vast drama of social struggle between two social systems and their ideologies has been reduced to the terms of a spy-thriller, the door is wide open to the social demagogue. Every failure of American foreign policy, every mistake on the home front can be attributed to the work of conspirators in the government. From this it follows that the government officials under whose administration these failures or mistakes occurred must either be a party to the conspiracy, or at the very least have been delinquent in weeding out the conspirators. Anyone who questions this analysis, or its particular application to any field or individual is suspect of attempting to shield conspirators and their work. Not the least, nor the last victims of McCarthyism have been and will be the very liberals who adopted the "conspiracy" theory of Stalinism in the first place.

No political grouping in the country has been able to meet and defeat McCarthy on his own ground. The Stalinists and Stalinoids have, in the main, sought refuge in the Fifth Amendment. The liberals have howled about his immoral methods, but since they and the Democrats as a whole accept his basic premises, their answer to the charge of "twenty years of treason" is a feeble: but we were the first to throw Communists in jail for their ideas -- we invented the subversive list -- we passed the McCarran Acts -- we....

And the rest of the Republican Party, once it recognized that McCarthyism is as much a danger as an asset to itself, has taken three tacks. One was to seek to ignore the Senator and his allies. When this proved impossible, it was to attempt to "beat him at his own game." When that failed to bring him to heel, it was to catch him off base on an issue unrelated to his political activities, and to seek to crush him politically, or at any rate to blackmail him into docility by showing him that they, too, can play rough in politics.

Although McCarthyism has found its most able, dramatic and effective spokesman in McCarthy, as a political force it does not depend on him for its existence. Without considerable and powerful backing inside the Republican Party and among a group of capitalists, McCarthy could never have become the feared figure he is.

The thing which most clearly distinguishes the Senator from Wisconsin and his "movement" from the rest of the reactionary right wing of his party is its evident determination to wage a struggle for power inside the party to the bitter end. In this struggle they have not hesitated to denigrate the leader of their party, and the sacrosanct office of the President of the United States. They have not recoiled from the discreditment and disruption of respected and vital government agencies and institutions. In short, they have shown contempt and disregard for the interests of their party, its administration, and the prestige of the United

States government both at home and abroad. By any standard of democratic capitalist politics, they have failed to play the game according to the accepted rules.

This sets McCarthy and his followers and supporters apart from the ordinary conservative or reactionary element in the Republican Party. Although he has been the spearhead of the attack against the Democrats, the goal of unlimited power which he appears to aim at has served to turn a heavy section of the party against him.

McCarthyism is not a fascist tendency or movement. Still, it is not an "ordinary" conservative or even reactionary bourgeois current. Its course is away from bourgeois democracy. It presents not the traditional fascist danger of mobilization of the discontented petty bourgeois masses as a mass force to smash labor, but rather the danger of the imposition of a dictatorial, labor-curbing regime from above by authoritarian state measures of repression.

McCarthyism represents a premature attempt to impose now the kind of regime toward which American capitalism tends in the absence of a vigorous and conscious struggle by the labor movement for socialist and democratic policies. This accounts both for the resistance which it meets from the most solid sections of the bourgeoisie and Republican leadership, as well as for the relative feebleness of their resistance for the division it brings into their own ranks.

The rise of a serious fascist movement in the United States can only be a product of a much more powerful and extreme polarization of American politics than is now the case. In such a situation, there can be no doubt that many of the forces now rallied behind McCarthyism would be elements which would go into the formation of a fascist movement. In the present situation, however, the real danger to democracy and the labor movement is the strengthening of reaction, the extension of the witchhunt, the further encroachments of garrison and police-state tendencies on the whole of society.

Labor in a Period of Transition

So far this analysis has concerned itself primarily with the political relations and struggle in the bourgeois parties, and with the impact of changing economic and world conditions on this struggle. The political position of the working class has been considered from only one point of view, i. e., that of its possible response to the pressure of capitalist reaction.

Throughout this period the labor leadership has been firmly attached to the Democratic Party (the exceptions are well known). In 1952, the American Federation of Labor endorsed a candidate for the presidency for the first time since 1924 -- and went down to defeat with Stevenson.

But the attachment has been somewhat different in recent years than before. Through the CIO's Political Action Committee, and the AFL's League for Political Education, and here and there directly in the Democratic Party, the labor leadership has slowly been building a political organization, a quasi-machine of its own. Although in the overwhelming majority of cases this machine has been simply a tail to the Democrat's kite, here and there it has fallen out with the political machine of the Democrats and waged political campaigns parallel to theirs or even against them.

The defeat of the Democrats in 1952, and the advent of the Eisenhower confronted the labor movement with a new political situation. From a tendency in the first months of Republican rule to hope for the best from the new government, the labor leadership has been rudely shocked into the realization that the businessmen who now run the government will use their political power to support their economic interests with few inhibitions.

Given their political notions, it is quite natural that the labor leaders should turn to their old "friends" the Democratic opposition. But this opposition has adopted self-effacement as the "smart" tactic to pursue. The leaders of the party, with Stevenson at their head, have been busy re-cementing their ties with the Southern reactionaries as the quickest means to regain control of Congress and the political patronage which goes with it. The interests of labor, the pleas of labor . . . there will be enough time for that when the election campaign draws near with its open season for social demagoguery.

#### New Political Problems Face Labor

But the problems which confront the working class, and hence the labor movement and its leadership, are not just a continuation of the problems of 1952. They, too, face the dilemma of the transition from a war economy to an economy with a large military establishment. And the workers feel the impact of the transition far more sharply and immediately and urgently than do the capitalists.

The working class can choose between two main policies. One is to support the New Deal wing of the capitalist class and the Democratic Party and to push for its revival on an expanded scale. The other is to match the political drive of capitalist reaction with an independent political drive and emancipating program of its own.

It is most likely that in the immediate future the labor movement will take the first course.

- a) The Democrats had the good fortune to be defeated before the cold war slowed down. The Republicans are thus saddled with political responsibility for the softening which is taking place in the economy. If



this softening continues till November 1954, it is quite likely that control of Congress will shift to the Democrats. The working class remained basically loyal to them in 1952. Now a growing contingent of farmers and hard-pressed middle class people will turn to them also. The argument that we had prosperity under the Democrats, and that things started to "slow up" when the Republicans got in can well top the screams of the witchhunters this fall.

b) If the recession is a slight one and fails to deepen during or immediately after the electoral campaign, the workers and labor leaders will probably be satisfied, for the present, with a few minor concessions from the Democrats: a good deal in the way of promises, and a bit on account in the way of extended unemployment compensation and the like.

c) If unemployment and short weeks cut really deep into the ranks of the working class, they will want much more. Yet, regardless of how bad things get in this respect, it is probable that the workers and the leadership of the labor movement will seek to win their demands in and through the Democratic Party. Only repeated rebuffs, and a more or less prolonged failure of the party to bring into being measures which can satisfy their most elementary demands will lead them to break with it.

d) In the long run, the economic consequences, and hence the political imperatives of a lull in the cold war cannot be avoided by labor. And even in the short run, the end to the sellers' market for labor power will create a new situation inside the labor movement as well as in its relations to the two capitalist political parties.

e) The pressure for some kind of action from the labor leadership is bound to grow in the ranks. Unlike the situation in the '30s, when the basic core of the industrial working class was unorganized, the pressure cannot take the form of a mass surge to unionism. Now it must take the form of a movement within the unions for action from the leadership. If the leadership fails to lead, the ranks will turn against them in one way or another.

f) Given the political atmosphere in the country, the grave danger exists that a section of the working class will seek to go outside the labor movement for leadership if it gets none from the bureaucracy or the advanced militants in the unions. The reactionary demagogues will find fertile soil in a section of the union membership, particularly on foreign policy issues, as well as in the middle class.

g) Although it is likely that the first political

-17-

movement will be back to the New Deal, the limitations to which it is subject (sketched above) will produce increasingly sharp frictions between the labor movement and their Democratic allies. The former will demand a social program far more extensive than the latter are willing or able to grant.

h) Initially, this friction will take place inside the labor-Democratic alliance, and more specifically, inside the Democratic Party. As it develops in intensity, and its scope spreads from the narrower issues of candidates and tactics to the broader ones of program and policy, the tendency will be for the struggle to break out of the bounds of the Democratic Party into the development of new political forms.

i) At this point it is desirable to refer once again to the impact on the relations of the labor movement to the Democratic Party of the reactionary drive of the right wing of the Republican Party (see above). The tendency to hang together in the face of the enemy will naturally be present. This tendency will remain dominant only if labor's elementary need for democracy at home can be served by its alliance. But the Democratic Party as a whole is neither likely to be able to elaborate a foreign policy which can compete with the Republicans, nor to stand fast for the protection of labor's rights and interests at home. It is this fact, as much as anything else, which will create the most serious conflict inside the Democratic Party, and which can lead to labor's eventual break from it.

The ultimate development of these tendencies cannot be drawn in detail from this distance. It is enough to seek to discern the general tendency of the alternative courses of development which lie ahead. Having grasped them, it is the duty of the conscious socialist organization to propagandize and educate for those policies in and for the labor movement which are most likely to advance the political and social interests of the working class and hence of the nation as a whole.

#### Program of the ISL

The Independent Socialist League will concentrate its propaganda and education in the coming period on three major interrelated issues. These are 1) the struggle for democracy in the United States; 2) the struggle for a democratic foreign policy based on the concept of the Third Camp; 3) the struggle for an independent policy of the working class on all issues, economic, social and political, which confront the American people, and for the formation by labor of an independent political instrument as the prime requirement for the effectuation of such an independent policy.

1) The Struggle for Democracy in the U. S.

a) The ISL will continue to push for the most uncompromising defense of civil liberties in this country. Without for a moment relinquishing its utter hostility to Stalinism, and its political struggle against the Stalinists in the labor movement and all popular organizations, it will continue to defend their civil liberties against all legal and illegal repression.

The field of espionage and counter-espionage lies outside the realm of interest or responsibility of the socialist movement. The ISL will continue, however, to oppose the extension of the concepts and activities of counter-espionage to the field of politics and ideas. It defends the right of all people to teach, to hold jobs, and to participate in the social and political life of the nation without let or hindrance because of their political ideas and associations. In the realm of academic freedom particularly, where the principle of professional competence has been replaced with that of ideology and/or political affiliation as the basis on which to determine the fitness of people to teach, the ISL declares that this is a blow at the basic concept of academic freedom in our schools and universities.

b) The ISL will continue to fight to get off the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations. It views this fight not only or primarily as a necessity to defend its legal rights and those of its members, but as a major contribution to the fight for democracy in this country.

In its effort to get off the subversive list, the ISL will constantly seek to broaden the issue, in its own propaganda as well as in whatever legal action it may take, to include a general attack on the list itself. It will seek to rally the broadest possible support against the arbitrary methods by which the list is set up, and against the continued existence of a list of organizations which are banned to a state of semi-legality by the very fact of their being listed.

c) The ISL will seek to arouse all sections of the labor movement and liberal opinion against the practices and concepts of the witchhunt in all its manifestations. It will seek to educate the widest possible circles against the idea that the witchhunt, in general, or its special manifestation in McCarthyism, can be stopped by an acceptance of its premises coupled with a plea for "decent" and "responsible" methods in carrying it out. We will continue to emphasize that Stalinism can best be defeated when it is drawn into open struggle as a political movement, and confronted by a democratic and socialist political ideology and movement which offers a superior program for the solution of the problems of the working class and society as a whole.

d) Our press and our members must seek every opportunity to educate the widest possible stratum of workers, students and others to the connection between the reactionary drive against

democracy, the economic decline in this country, and the drive toward war.

e) As part of the struggle for democracy at home, the ISL will continue to fight against all manifestations of discrimination against racial, national and religious minorities. It will continue to demand complete social, political and economic equality especially for the Negroes, the section of the American people who are still most consistently, broadly and viciously discriminated against in all these fields.

f) In the struggle for democracy, the labor movement must be urged to take the leading role which the defense and promotion of its own interests require. The abolition of discriminatory practices against Negroes and other minorities in its own ranks is a prerequisite to its ability to effectively combat these practices by employers and in the country as a whole. Similarly, in continuing its fight against the influence of the Stalinists, the labor movement must firmly reject the ideas and methods of the witchhunt in its internal affairs, as well as the efforts of the government and employers to introduce them into the fields of industry and collective bargaining.

g) Of special concern to the workers is the struggle against the bureaucratic encroachment on democracy in the labor movement. In its propaganda on this question, the ISL will constantly emphasize the concrete necessity of rank and file initiative and participation as a precondition for labor's successful struggle on the economic and political fields. The fight against bureaucratism and for inner-union democracy will be most fruitful where it is linked to the struggle for a specific program of union and political demands.

## 2) The Struggle for a Democratic Foreign Policy

a) The failure of the government's foreign policy to stabilize the world capitalist system, either economically or politically, will continue to play into the hands of the most reactionary section of the American bourgeoisie and their political representatives. Thus, to the widespread desire in this country for a foreign policy which can assure peace without permitting the continued expansion of Stalinism is added the need for a foreign policy which can deprive the reactionaries of the initiative at home.

b) The working class has been weakened in the face of its enemies by its relatively uncritical support of the foreign policy of both Democratic and Republican administrations. This will become an even greater liability to the labor movement in the future. In its propaganda for a democratic foreign policy, the ISL must seek every opportunity to drive this fact home to the advanced strata of the labor movement.

c) The labor movement, and the democratic forces in the country in general, can only effectively counter the drive of reaction by adopting and fighting for a truly democratic foreign policy. Such a policy must be based on the support of popular democratic movements and social forces abroad.

d) In the colonial and semi-colonial world, this means the unqualified support of democratic movements for independence and self-determination. It means the support of all democratic movements in these countries against reactionary economic and political institutions, governments and classes. It means a steadfast opposition to the policy of this government which supports reactionary and imperialist governments abroad in the interest of military alliances against Stalinism.

e) A democratic foreign policy with respect to the advanced capitalist countries abroad means likewise the support of the labor and socialist movements as against the capitalist parties who seek to continue their tottering rule over the working class. It involves the struggle for the use of the enormous wealth of this country not to bolster capitalism, but to encourage and support the widest redistribution of wealth and democratic administration of the economies of these countries in the interest of their populations.

f) In its struggle for a democratic foreign policy, the ISL will continue to emphasize the inability of a government run by either of the capitalist parties to initiate and carry out such a program. It will seek to counteract the tendency of the liberal and labor movements to give critical support to the existing government's policy on the grounds that this is essential if Stalinism is to be restrained from further conquests, and in the hope that somehow, in due course, they will be able to bring their influence to bear on this government for a modification of its policy in a democratic direction.

On the contrary, a complete break with the government's position and the espousal of a democratic foreign policy in opposition to it is necessary not only to halt United States support to colonial oppressors and reactionary governments, but as the only strategy which can defeat Stalinism both as an imperialist power and a world movement.

It is essential to emphasize that simple "anti-Stalinism" is far less capable of defeating this totalitarian movement than was the liberal and Stalinist "anti-fascism" capable of preventing Nazism from coming to power.

Stalinism must be confronted with movements which fight with the utmost determination and militancy against the decaying social systems and their ruling classes which create the social soil for the Stalinist movements. American foreign policy is guilty of bolstering and supporting the very conditions on which Stalinism thrives, and of opposing or working contrary to the interests of the very social movements which

are most capable of defeating Stalinism.

It is in the creation of a positive social principle, a positive social force to defeat Stalinism that the chief strength of a democratic foreign policy lies. The fact that this cannot be done without also endangering, at the very least, the continuation of the capitalist system all over the world should not in the slightest deter all who are truly devoted to the principles of democracy and freedom from adopting and struggling for it.

3) The Social and Political Struggle in the U. S.

a) A continued softening of the economy would, in due course, exert a depressing effect on the standard of living of the workers. Unemployment, short work weeks, an intensification of the speedup and the introduction of labor-displacing machinery, the closing down of less efficient plants, all these would sharpen the problems of the workers and the labor movement.

It would be wrong to expect that such developments will have an immediate, drastic effect in the radicalization of the workers. It will take some time for the labor movement to reorient its political and industrial policies.

b) The labor movement will find it more difficult, in the coming period, for both economic and political reasons, to achieve any gains for the workers. To the degree that the unions seek to resist the lowering of wages and the layoffs by economic struggles, these will be defensive ones.

c) The ISL should adopt and seek to propagandize a program of specific demands for placing the burden of unemployment and short work weeks on the shoulders of the corporations. The demand for a guaranteed annual wage, for shorter hours without reduction in pay, for a drastic extension and increase in amounts of unemployment compensation, for employment at trade union wages guaranteed by the federal government to all, will be outstanding features of such a program.

In addition, the organization and its members should pay the closest attention to demands put forth by the workers themselves. Our chief criteria in putting forth an economic program should be; is any particular demand of a generally progressive social character. Is it the kind of demand which can mobilize the workers to political and economic action in their own behalf.

d) Our friends in the unions, and our writers and propagandists should be alert to every change in the mood of the workers. We must recognize that the long period of passivity has had a dulling effect on us as well as the masses. Without exaggerating every sign of the revival of political and social consciousness and militancy among the workers, we should recognize that conservatism is the chief danger for us in this changing situation.

e) Throughout the labor movement we must seek to spread the understanding that prime responsibility for the sagging of the economic superstructure rests with the government, and that the most important type of activity for the workers is political activity.

f) To the initial swing toward New Dealism, we must counterpose in every way possible the idea of independent labor politics, of the independent labor party. This will remain the main propagandistic line of LABOR ACTION and our friends in the unions, but in a more intense, lively and concrete way than in the past few years.

g) Wherever possible, on a local basis, our friends in the unions should seek to stimulate and participate in the running of independent labor candidates on the basis of the most radical platform possible.

Where unions have rejected our policy and have decided for participation in bourgeois parties, must we take a hands-off position and refuse to participate any further in the discussions? Such a question was raised at our last convention and is posed again by the fact that the labor movement shows no present signs of breaking away from the Democratic Party.

It is entirely permissible, in fact it is indicated to our friends to point out to union militants who have rejected our proposals and who look toward the Democratic Party and who hope to utilize it in the interests of the working class that they, from their viewpoint, which we do not share, ought to fight for their own candidates from the ranks of labor and responsible to it even in the Democratic Party. It would be correct, in this connection, to discuss in advance how to stimulate or prompt such militants to press in union debates for such decisions.

As in the past, wherever the local electoral set-up provides for non-partisan candidates as in Detroit, or offers an independent line, as the Liberal Party in New York, we campaign for the unions to run their own candidates.

The United States is still deep in the woods of conservatism engendered by the long armament-based prosperity. But the softening of the economy at home, and the continued inability of the United States to stabilize and consolidate the capitalist world against Stalinism cannot help but lead to moods of questioning, uneasiness and eventually to a revival of political and trade union consciousness and militancy in the working class.

The chief danger for the weak and beleaguered socialist movement in this country is that it will succumb to the pressures which bear down upon it; that the passivity which has become widespread in its ranks will prevent it from recognizing and responding to the new opportunities which may well present themselves in the not too distant future.

We have become all too familiar with the American working class from its meanest, bourgeois side. We must take care lest we fail to recognize and properly assess the beginnings of its political reawakening because of the confused and contradictory forms which it may at first assume.

The least of our dangers is that we will jump to some form of foolhardy or adventurist political line or activity at the present time. What is required of us above all is steadfastness in the face of continuing adversity, and next to that the closest and most painstaking attention to every change in the mood of the workers and the population at large. That is the duty not only of the leadership, but of every conscious socialist who has stuck by his principles and ideas through the long, dreary pull. If we fulfill this duty, and act firmly and determinedly when the situation permits, the results will give our activity an impact and meaning which may well far exceed what we have been able to accomplish during the past few years.

THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT BY SHACHTMAN-GATES-HASKELL  
to follow the 6th paragraph on page 22.

"In this connection, the Convention decides that the categorical prohibition against ISL support for such candidates under any circumstances, which was adopted at the last convention of the League, is no longer operative."

(This amendment was not carried, the vote in the PC being 3-3)  
(It will be presented to the National Committee Plenum and the Convention.)



Discussion article

SHOULD THE BOLSHEVIKS HAVE SURRENDERED STATE POWER?

As the main point in his review of Deutscher's recent Trotsky biography Comrade Beilas has presented a viewpoint which warrants comment and discussion in broader circles than merely the Berkeley SYL unit in which the talk was given.

Specifically, in dealing with the period in Bolshevik Russia around 1921, just after the conclusion of the civil war, Beilas proposes that the subsequent Stalinist evolution could have been avoided if 1) the Bolsheviks had not permanently outlawed even those parties which accepted Soviet parliamentarism as did sections of the SRs and Mensheviks of the time; and if factions had not been prohibited within the Communist Party as well. And further 2) that at this time the Communists should have called for new elections to the All-Russian Soviets and turned the state power over to whatever majority party or coalition emerged from the Soviet elections. Although Beilas recognizes at least some of the implications in this retrospective proposal (he agrees with Deutscher that the CP would not have been reaffirmed in power), he states that whatever the outcome of this course it would be a lesser-evil to the course that history actually took.

I want to disagree in the strongest possible way with the second of these conclusions of Comrade Beilas and with their implications as lessons for the future. Even assuming, as is likely, that the Bolsheviks would have been only a plurality party in the event of elections at that time, to have allowed the exercise of power to pass into the hands of any of the existing parties formally accepting the Soviet framework would have been, in those specific circumstances, a betrayal of the first magnitude of socialism and would have assured the defeat of the first world revolution of 1917-23. In advance, success of the German revolution of 1923 would have been precluded. To be sure, such a course of action would have postponed the emergence of bureaucratic collectivism to another time and perhaps another place, but would hardly have eliminated it as the alternative to capitalism given the failure of the working class to hold power.

Among the consequences of the Beilas' idea, two are outstanding. Firstly, the surrender of governmental power by the Bolsheviks would have been the first and decisive step in a renewed counter-revolutionary attempt resulting in the dismemberment of Soviet Russia into imperialist spheres of influence and the imposition of a dictatorial regime over the populace. For as Deutscher points out, there was no other part capable of governing Russia through the Soviets, let alone guiding the Third International along revolutionary lines whose results would have been the only way of bringing real succor to the dispirited Russian Revolution (eg successful proletarian revolution in Germany). Look at the Menshevik and Left Social Revolutionary parties in this period - the Mensheviks were openly calling for the restoration of the capitalist order and the both of them hailed the Kronstadt uprising of March, 1921 with its alternate cries of "Soviets without Communists" and "Non-recognition of Soviet Power." At best, such a situation as Beilas favors would have led to the imperialist interventionists and White Guardists being stimulated and encouraged to new efforts against a government now incapable of vigorous defense and prone to compromise.

Second, it is inescapable in the Beilas' framework that, at least if one's Marxian foresight were good enough, the October Revolution should never have taken place, for to what avail was it if its only outcome were the reintroduction of capitalism and that after an incredibly bloody, destructive Civil War? The Beilas notion is in support of the Menshevik's theoretical view that Russia was ripe for capitalism only.

There is no dispute about the first of the Beilas proposals concerning the maintenance of the party democracy and of viable Soviets containing politically (but not militarily) oppositional elements. For our hindsight can and does alert us to the necessity of stamping on the tendrils of Stalinism and combating those practices which might give it nourishments. But this is far different from the surrender of power by the only party capable of maintaining the workers' power at a moment when a disoriented, partially demolished working class together with a hostile peasantry, though fiercely adhering to the October Revolution, might through reaction to the just terminated civil war and the still existing War Communism allow their own dominance in society to be irretrievably lost. And the party which allowed this to happen would be lost as well, not perhaps as a party, but surely as a revolutionary party, for it would find subsequently that it had attracted those elements and tendencies which all along had been calling for such a course.

To be sure when the revolution was at such an ebb as to reveal a gap between the working class and its leading party, then was the revolution in dire straits, but the answer is not the social suicide by the workers which Beilas proposes.

James THOMPSON

Berkeley, Cal.  
March 15, 1954