

**Wanted:  
all the facts  
all the time**

There seems to be a blackout of news in the State of California, that the membership of the Party hasn't been receiving. First there is the statement that Dennis made, in relation to questioning the leadership of the Soviet Union. Pravda printed the statement, yet the membership of the C.P. here doesn't know all that it contained. Second, the Central Committee of the CPSU issued an answer, not only for United States Communists, but for Italian, French and English who had already raised similar questions. We only received excerpts in the People's World. It's impossible to get a decent picture when these important statements, and many others, are not printed in full. The PW, in my opinion, is not publishing the most important material for the kind of readership it has. It may be under the impression that the PW has a broad base, and even with a broad base, these are important statements. The fact remains that for the most part, according to the figures, the readers are left progressives, and are vitally concerned with these developments. I think it's about time the PW faced the cold facts and proceeded on that basis, not on what they wish to be the situation.

Since the PW is not reporting in full on such questions, I feel the CP has a big responsibility in making this material available. Max Weiss wrote an article on "Civil Liberties." As a result loads of letters from the membership were written. Certainly the leadership cannot abdicate this responsibility. Let them all write in the bulletin and help start the ball rolling and you will see all the letters that will come pouring in from the rank and file — pros and con.

We don't expect and don't want formalized answers. We expect the leadership to recognize the crisis the party is in. So far none of the reports indicate that. Just put your questions and thoughts down on paper, just like the membership is expected to do.

As the basis for pre-convention discussion we have the Dennis and Weiss reports. This to me is in complete contradiction to what Weiss says, in his pamphlet, on democracy. "First there is the imperative need to open new channels which will facilitate membership participation in policy decisions. This is one respect of a far wider need, namely, to consult with the masses in formulating policy."

As things stand today, we usually find that party policies are formulated in top bodies after extended periods of debate, sometimes of the sharpest and most protracted character. But the membership never hears of such debates. It only gets the finished product, the end result of the discussion. The varied aspects of the question under discussion which, on top levels, precipitate lively differences are never communicated to the membership. Hence, the membership is rarely aware of the process by which policies are hammered out on top levels. They never learn which contrary views were considered and rejected or why. Not only does this militate against the education of the membership. It also deprives the leadership of the opinions and views of the membership which are indispensable for the correct, collective formulation of party policy. By the time some discussion which has taken place in the top body reaches the membership, it is a cut and dried end product with all life-giving juices drained out. To add insult to injury, in many cases free discussion of the policy in question is choked off in party branches by the top leadership under cover of "fighting the line". We thus have the anomalous situation where a difference of opinion in a top body is considered as "debate and discussion" but a difference of opinion in a branch is considered "opposition to the line."

These words written by Mac Weiss, should be read just by the Mac Weiss himself for his article on "Civil Liberties." The way he wrote that left no doubt that he was speaking in the name of the party, when the party members hadn't had much discussion to come to some of the conclusions that

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## About limits

Several protests have been received about the previously announced 1,000 word limit on contributions to The Party Forum.

The purpose of a word limit in a bulletin, like a time limit on discussion at a meeting, is to afford the opportunity for the widest participation. An article of 3,000 words displaces four of 750 words, and the problem is to arrive at some medium that provides for reasonably full expression by each individual, without at the same time foreclosing contributions from others or unreasonably delaying their publication. A word limit also serves the incidental purpose of encouraging more concise expression.

The editorial committee proposes a 1,500 word limit, and urges all contributors to try to comply. We do not wish to assume responsibility for trimming any of these articles, and apologize to those few persons whose articles had been cut.

he came to. His denial, in later remarks, that he was speaking as an individual, doesn't hold much water, his words are there in print. Also every member of the national committee and leadership on all levels should begin applying those words, and demanding that we apply democracy in our ranks, starting now, not some time in the future.

When I first read the Dennis and Weiss reports I didn't feel they answered or even began to tackle some of the basic questions that people had already raised. But I rationalized in my mind, after all, they didn't have all the facts, Khrushchev's report was still a secret, even for them.

But now I have learned that the national committee had a bona fide report on Khrushchev's second report, that was read the time of its meeting. I am shocked that this was kept secret from the membership. The Dennis report doesn't even touch upon the 20th Congress. Weiss' report sounds like they had scattered reports on Khrushchev's speech. The main reports that were printed should have stated that they had received a bona fide report on Khrushchev's secret report, and more than that, compared some of the terror that took place in the Soviet Union with some of the terror and bureaucracy in our party. Again I will rationalize, if they were not capable of digesting Khrushchev's report — in terms of being self-critical of our party by recognizing a crisis situation as some members did — then let these reports be withdrawn and deeper reports be placed for discussion, because, on this question many members

(Continued on back page)

## Let the leaders go, and the clubs remain

In view of the present crisis in leadership and organization of the Party, I propose that:

- National and state leadership be dissolved and the personnel involved go to work in private industry, if possible.
- All newspapers, schools, and allied organizations be set up on an independent financial and political basis.
- All party clubs should become autonomous units with complete freedom to make and execute policy, to affiliate or disaffiliate, to change name and form of organization to fit the best interests of the working class.

Why do I feel that such radical steps are necessary? To begin with, these changes are needed to shatter the thick layers of bureaucracy which now suffocate and mislead the Marxist movement. Secondly, they would bring

## DISSOLUTION IS NO SOLUTION

The Juarez club, Los Angeles County, CPUSA, expresses its confidence in our national leadership and commends that leadership for its wise policy of leaving wide open all questions of program and policy pending the fullest and freest pre-convention discussion and action by the convention itself. This, to us, is a welcome concrete expression of that inner-party democracy to which most of our leading cadres, including the national, have much too often in the past given only lip-service. At the same time, we do not consider that the national leadership is absolved from the obligation of taking part in that discussion.

The Juarez club hails this democratic approach to the very serious and fundamental problems confronting our party in this critical period and demands that this approach be institutionalized and implemented to cover all phases of party life and activity to the end that bureaucratic centralism shall be replaced with democratic centralism. The Juarez club, recognizing that responsibility for the imposition of bureaucratic centralism upon our party does not rest entirely with the leadership, solemnly pledges to vigorously oppose any tendency, from whatever quarter, to continue or rehabilitate this utterly reprehensible and harmful bureaucratic practice.

To assure the fullest participation of the membership in the pre-convention discussion and convention decisions, it is necessary that the membership be kept fully informed on discussions in the national and other top committees. The Juarez club condemns present methods of haphazard, distorted and diluted reports to the membership on discussions in the national committee, etc. We demand that the membership receive adequate information on the thinking of the leadership, including dissident or minority views. The Juarez club moreover expects and insists that the views of the membership, as developed in the pre-convention discussion, shall be reflected in the decisions of the convention, in accordance with the principles of democratic centralism.

This club also takes this opportunity to express its adamant opposition to any and all ideas and proposals aimed at the liquidation of the Communist Party, USA. Our members are similarly opposed, with one exception, to any change of name for our party. It is our collective opinion, with the one exception noted, that the results sought by those proposing a change

of name, can be effected only by repudiating at the same time our basic principles and this, to us, is utterly unthinkable.

"A rose," as the poet said, "will smell as sweet by any other name." In the same sense, a Marxist party in mid-twentieth century America will inevitably be red-baited and smeared no matter what name it adopts. The answer to such attacks on our party is not to masquerade under false colors, but rather to sink our roots deep among the American people by the application of correct policies, tactics and hard work, and the utilization of the vast reservoir of good-will existing among many sections of the working-class and the Negro people for our party, as a result of its relentless struggles for better working conditions, for the rights of the Negro people, for peace and decency, with a socialist America as its ultimate goal. We reject the contemptible thesis that our party stands today "hopelessly compromised, politically and morally."

This club fully recognizes the necessity for a searching reappraisal by our party of its program, policies and tactics, of frank criticism of past errors and determined efforts to correct those errors and guard against their repetition. We condemn, however, present tendencies to ignore all that is good and inspiring in our past. We suggest that while there should be no diminution of principled criticism, no lag in our determination to root out bureaucratic methods, sectarian thinking and mechanical application of Marxist principles to the American scene, it is nonetheless high time that we discarded the sackcloth and ashes as a permanent garb and pried ourselves loose from the wailing wall.

Our party has made serious errors, it is true; not the least being our uncritical attitude towards other Communist parties and the socialist countries. But our mistakes were honest mistakes, if still inexcusable. (How many other groups can truthfully say the same of much of their policies since 1914?) And certainly we were not the consistently inept blunderers, the unmitigated fools and idiots that some flagellant comrades seem to take a masochistic delight in depicting us to have been. We have many correct policies and achievements to our credit. We have written many a glorious page in American history, as an integral part of the American people. Our party has contributed greatly to the growth of the American labor movement and to the development of the now burgeoning freedom struggle of the Negro people. We have helped advance the cause of the Mexican-American people and other minority groups. We need no apology for our existence.

If we are at present isolated from these movements, that isolation can be overcome in time by the correction of past mistakes, the elimination of incorrect policies, tactics and approaches, and by hard work. We already are making some small gains in the labor movement and there are countless ways in which we can actively help, and rally support to, the Negro freedom movement. Let us, then, resolve to pry ourselves loose from the wailing wall and conscientiously and vigorously carry forward the necessary task of reappraisal and the wiping out of bureaucracy, sectarianism, doctrinarism — and right opportunism as well.

Long live the Communist Party, USA!

The Juarez Club,  
Los Angeles, California  
Cyril Briggs, Educational Director

Teamster—S.F.

# YOUTH WORK—IT ISN'T THAT ROSY

After several months of spirited and critical discussion of past party policies, we read Bill Lowe's article, *A Glance At Our Work Among The Youth* (Party Forum, I, #2) with dismay and astonishment.

We do not intend this as a personal attack on any comrade. The job today is not one of individual faultfinding. Rather, we must attempt to understand the causes for past mistakes. This, however, requires that all of us be willing to take leave of the habit of thinking and writing in broad and inaccurate generalizations, and instead, start doing some critical thinking about our political work.

It is because the above mentioned article is an example of the type of pronouncements by leading comrades which have been accepted without any criticism in the past, and which have helped lead us into sectarian self-satisfaction and self-delusion, that it deserves serious attention. Contrary to the rosy picture of the L. Y. L. presented by Lowe, the actual situation in this organization over the past number of years has been far from satisfactory. Improvement of the Party's work among youth, and especially improvement of our work in the L. Y. L., is a pressing political task. An article about our youth work which never leaves the level of vague generalities and exhortations, and which omits dis-

ussion of the many serious shortcomings, detracts from, rather than aids our efforts to correct past mistakes.

It is simply not true that "... the L. Y. L. has and still is doing fine work..." nor that it is "... an independent youth organization in its own right... not a Communist Youth organization." These assertions, unaccompanied by any qualifications, are misleading and have the effect of perpetuating illusions at a time when we desperately need clarity about our work.

The actual facts about the L. Y. L. in the past number of years, at least in this area, are, rather, that it has been an organization wherein the worst and most sectarian practices of the Party were magnified many times over.

Among the shortcomings in the L. Y. L. that need to be examined and corrected, we believe are the following:

- The practice of expelling members on flimsy evidence, bordering on gossip, usually accompanied by personal vilification.
- The lack of election of officers and the practice of having these "proposed" by the county and state leadership.
- The existence of pressures by the leadership upon highly qualified students members of the L. Y. L. to abandon their studies and go into industry — this despite our nation-wide shortage of technically trained intellectual workers.

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• A rigid emphasis on "practical" work, such that student members had little time to attend to their studies, with the result that many were forced to choose between leaving the L. Y. L. (with the accompanying danger of personal vilification), and flunking out of school. This practice of de-emphasizing the importance of academic work, and an atmosphere stultifying the naturally inquiring minds of most of its people, has seriously hampered the raising of a new cadre of theoretically equipped Marxists.

• An atmosphere existed in the L.Y.L. county organization which in practice prevented any criticism of the leadership — or even any serious discussion of any of its decisions by the membership. For this, there was not even the excuse of being a "democratic centralist" organization.

• In the student branch of the L. Y. L. there existed such an atmosphere of holier-than-thou sectarianism, that numerous liberal, progressive, and even socialist students who started out by wanting to cooperate with it were deliberately antagonized and driven away.

• Sectarian self-satisfaction in the L. Y. L. attained such ridiculous proportions that members were at times

criticised for dating non L. Y. L. people. In this climate of vanguardism, there unfortunately developed examples of the Beria approach to members and non-members alike. This seriously weakened the appeal of a Marxist organization among the youth.

It is regrettable that a comrade who held a leading position in the L. Y. L. during this period should omit discussion of these problems and should instead reassure himself, and his readers with the assertion that the L. Y. L. "... carries on a program which is attractive to many young people."

Needless to say, it is not our intention by these remarks to slur over the many accomplishments of the L. Y. L. both nationally and locally. Nor do we wish to minimize the difficulties of the L. Y. L. leadership in the face of a consistently disinterested attitude towards youth work by large segments of party members. We feel, however, that it is high time to start requiring from all party members, and especially from those in leading positions, that pious and often meaningless generalities be replaced with factual and critical discussion.

Specific examples of the above general criticism are omitted for the lack of space and for other obvious reasons, unfortunately not because they are lacking in abundance.

Two Party members,  
Alameda County

## Confidence vs. demoralization

The current discussion are most valuable. They have stimulated critical approach to basic questions on organization, education, general policy and perspectives. Without doubt thousands of constructive improvements have been discussed by many for weeks and months and will be reflected in various club meetings, conferences and conventions. Where we are going and how to get there will be much clearer as we consider, discard, rediscuss and rephrase our finished thoughts on the many changes we feel will be necessary to achieve our aims.

A service by the party leadership to help in some of these discussions would be to reprint and distribute the constitution of the party.

This way the members can start preparing changes relating to many basic questions, such as, membership, duties, obligations, relations between various groups, safeguards against abuse of authority, strengthening the voice of membership, elections, and numerous other problems affecting the organizational aspect of the Party. Our aims and perspectives in relation to socialism and our attitudes on relations with trade unions and mass organizations should be constitutionally documented.

A few months, historically speaking, is but a droplet of water in the ocean of time, yet some feel that everything must and can be corrected immediately even before the basis exists for some of the excellent suggestions under discussion. One cannot unite organizationally with a "current" or a "trend". We can help these socialist-minded groupings, lay the groundwork for organization, and then work out way and means of cooperation. Whether it is organic or otherwise will be determined by the situation at the time.

Because we have made all the errors of the past decade and suffered resultant losses and isolation doesn't mean we should permit ourselves to lose confidence in that wonderful organization that has given meaning to our lives. I have absolute confidence in the party and its members that will be elected to lead and/or continue to lead us in the direction of our aims.

In every crisis there are those who become overwhelmed by the enormous job ahead of us and lose their morale — that thing that sustains high interest in any objective. Unfor-

tunately such demoralization is apparent among some who have left us and others who place conditions on remaining in the party on the discussions and conventions outcome. Party history is replete with experiences of parties suffering major losses and isolation — Germany in the latter part of the last century, Russia following the 1905 revolution and China following the long march, to cite just a few. They didn't rush to disband, or fold their newspapers or blame everything on the subjective factors. (There certainly must have been many).

Internationally the perspectives have never looked better and as part of this international social advance, our possibilities appear better than ever. We have a good movement. We have a good paper and in the main, good leadership that we elected. If we feel capable of changing our past practices, habits and general work, we should allow for a similar development in the leadership. If such development doesn't seem likely at the time of the convention, then the automatic resignations which are in effect at a convention can be made permanent by exercising our right not to re-elect those unable to make these changes.

The convention should be followed up by a huge, unprecedented, well-publicized mass recruiting and circulation drive and an all-out public relations campaign directed at mass organizations and the people generally to lay the groundwork for a mass party capable of achieving whatever objectives we shall designate in our conventions as necessary.

W. J. S.—S.F.

## Protests word limit

I wish to strongly object to the statement appearing in the front page of No. 3 of The Party Forum to the effect that you will try to print all material received. It is within your responsibility to indicate the deadline for receipt of material and you should indicate the political or organizational reason for deadline but all material submitted by the date of deadline should be printed even if you have to print a 24 page edition three times a week. If this procedure is not adopted, comrades will only conclude that the editors of The Party Forum are printing what they want to see in print.

Furthermore, I do not believe that

## Much ado about a false issue

Quite a discussion has developed around the question of whether or not civil liberties will be granted to political opponents of socialism after a socialist government is established in the U.S.A. After a hard day's work in the shop and many responsibilities after work, it is no mean task to keep abreast with the serious discussion now going on around so many fundamental questions. However, I can't as yet figure out why the above-mentioned subject is important to me, my shop mates or for that matter, to others in the country.

I'm fully aware that basic Marxist tenets are being re-evaluated and due consideration must be given to theoretical questions which may not be of immediate urgency or expediency but which, nevertheless, will help light up the path in the climb towards a Socialist America. Raising this type of discussion is not only in contradiction to much that the American Marxists wish to accomplish in this process of re-evaluation, but is also presumptuous.

Is anyone able, at this stage of political development in our country, to spell out specifically how socialism will come into being in the U.S.A.? I don't think so. We may foresee the new possibilities opened up for moving in a socialist direction, and eventually to a socialist U.S.A., without a civil war, without a revolution in the classic meaning of the word, or without a dictatorship of the proletariat. But we certainly cannot foresee the relationship of forces at various stages as we

move in that direction. What the situation will be at various junctures to eventually determine the outcome of the question of civil liberties for opponents of socialism during and after the advent of socialism is something we should not "theorize" about now.

Getting into such a so-called theoretical debate now, at this level of development, indicated to me that Max Weiss would want the Marxists to pre-determine the outcome of this question now so that the Marxists would be prepared to put into life a line for which they have prepared themselves for many years. It is this very role allocated to the American Marxists, as a result of such a debate, that contradicts the objectives we aim to accomplish in hammering out an approach to the "American Road To Socialism".

This entire question dealing with civil liberties for opponents of socialism will have to be decided and acted upon by the forces that will bring America into the family of socialist nations and not by the Marxists in the year 1956.

Such a debate would be justified now if it were predicated upon the proposition that the USA will need a dictatorship of the proletariat, led by the American Communists, as the only approach to a socialist America. If, however, the present discussion in our ranks is predicated on the proposition that a new, a different, an American way must be sought for leading this country towards its Socialist goal, then we must allow this question and many others of this nature, to be solved in the course of the struggle for this new American way, by the various forces that will be involved in such a struggle.

To me it appears that we are not only presumptuous in raising this question in 1956, but that by doing it we fall into the very sectarianism from which we are so desirous to break out.

When the question of civil liberties for opponents of socialism arises on the order of the day for solution by the people, we as part of the people, and I hope at the head, will then advance our thinking with the hope that we had hit upon the best solution.

Were I asked by friend or foe: "What will you do with opponents of socialism after America becomes socialist?" I would retort: "What would you do with them, as I do not know the answer now."

Irene F.  
Los Angeles

E. C.—S.F.

## Suggestions on content of The PW

The following is the result of a collective discussion of six women from a club of eleven.

The P.W. today is neither a labor nor a Marxist paper. We feel the necessity for a Marxist paper on a weekly basis. We do not conceive of this as a mass paper since we feel this is unrealistic at this time. It should have an openly stated Marxist approach and should be addressed to honest, thinking Americans. The paper must interpret its news. There is a need for AP-UP coverage but news stories cannot be blanketly quoted with no expression of editorial policy. The paper might run a series of discussions on theoretical questions such as "peaceful transition to Socialism" in non-sectarian terminology. Our suggestions for possible content of such a paper would include:

- A Marxist interpretation of the present economic situation.
- Expression of minority (as well as majority) opinions from national, state, and county leadership.
- Controversial issues which stimulate interest—articles contributed by guest writers in and out of the party.
- Coverage of local issues as a guide to action as well as coverage of world wide issues.

Articles on human behavior from a Marxist position: relationships between men and women; parents and children; family and society. The paper should not be an organizational bulletin but an inter-party bulletin as regards discussions of theoretical problems and correspondence between clubs or individuals.

We would like the paper to raise its level of humor, including better cartoon humor.

We feel that the paper must not be a negative voice — it must recognize the positive features which exist in the American tradition and in our country today. Our paper must not be a "hate" sheet.

We must express humility. Let us say that we are trying to find answers

## LA writers protest

The writers section of L.A. County expresses its criticism of the manner in which both the name and role of Masses and Mainstream has been changed. While there was not time to discuss the merits of the change or to self-critically examine our own responsibility for the past, the fact that such basic changes were made without consultation with cultural workers outside of New York is in our opinion bureaucratic and counter to the approach which this period demands.

but recognize that others outside of the party are also seeking the truth.

We would like more coverage on the relationship of Communists in other countries in the world to their own countries. What can we learn from them? What problems do they have which would be applicable to our situation?

—Eastern, Los Angeles

## Definitions

Without the help of Karl Marx and having to rely on Webster, "cult" means: sect, worship of or devotion to an individual. Thus the weight of an attack is put, not on the individual, but on the cult and the uncritical over-zealous followers.

What does this mean to us in the U.S.? For one thing it should end the glamour-boy photos of Eugene Dennis, and the efforts of our press to invest him and other leaders with sainthood.

Because who can criticize a saint or deity and remain a member of the cult? And errors and excesses can be prevented only with the freedom to criticize leadership.

There are many manifestations of the cult among us. One that is particularly hard to answer is "maybe you think you can do a better job than Dennis. . ."

M. H. C., Oakland

## Security—and some abuses in its name

Speaking on the questions of security and membership, I wish to make the following observations:

The present method of trying and expelling members is both unfair and impractical. In fact, under the present system, the C.P. itself is doing almost as good a job as the F.B.I. in chopping down the party.

First, a few remarks on criticism: After Browder was expelled, Foster was asked why it was that he did not speak up against Browder's attempt to transform the party. Foster's answer was that Browder had so much prestige that if he criticized him then he, Foster, would have been expelled from the party.

Thus it is clear that any criticism of the leadership is judged as an attack on the party and the comrade voicing such an opinion is regarded as an enemy of the party.

At the present time we have in each city where the party functions a trial committee which has the power to expel members for offenses varying from "negligence" and "political errors" to anti-party activities.

In actual practice, when the committee meets with club to try the defendant, the committee comes in with a decision before the club has even heard the case and acts more like an inquisition than an un-prejudiced trial committee. Sometimes an important point is brought up that the club members had never heard of until the time of the trial.

Article VIII, Section 6, of our Constitution, ends with the sentence "All such charges shall be handled expeditiously."

Indeed! no time should be lost in throwing the comrade out of the party! This point sounds like the work of a hatchet-man.

Section 9 states that "Any member who has been subject to disciplinary action has the right to appeal to the next higher body up to the National Convention, whose decision shall be final."

Appeal to which next higher body?

Brother, when the trial committee expels you — you're out.

In light of the above, I wish to propose the following changes in our Constitution:

- No party member can be expelled from the party for blunders or mistakes unless he is acting as an enemy of the party.

- If a comrade holding a responsible position is found guilty of blunders or negligence he should be punished as follows:

- a. Removal from office.
- b. Placed on one year's probation.

- If a rank and file comrade be guilty, he should be:

- Placed on one year's probation.

Such a probationary period would give his comrades time to help him overcome his weakness.

In addition to the trial committee, an appeals committee should be formed in each county, etc. The defendant should then have the right to appeal to the general membership. This is the procedure followed by some of the most progressive unions.

On page 57 of his pamphlet "How to Be a Good Communist" the Chinese Communist leader Liu Shao-Chi says:

"The comrades of the fourth kind who adopt an absolute attitude are also wrong. This attitude is the opposite of liberalism — the third attitude mentioned above. Those who adopt this attitude do not understand that the incorrect ideologies in the Party have a deep-rooted social origin and cannot be eliminated at one stroke. All comrades in the Party, at different times, are more or less apt to reflect some incorrect ideology of society. . . . It is inevitable that everyone of us will commit some mistakes in our work. If we do not tolerate and make allowances but absolutely reject and even eliminate all comrades who to some degree or other reflect non-proletarian ideologies of society and who commit some mistakes but who are not incorrigibly bad elements, then our Party cannot be built up."

J. M., San Francisco

## To admit or list mistakes is not enough

The primary purpose of a discussion such as the one our party is now engaged in should not be that of fault-finding, either in terms of singling out the individuals primarily responsible for past mistakes, or in terms of listing the specific policies which, with hindsight, can now be seen as having been incorrect.

A discussion limited to this alone will accomplish only a small part of that basic re-evaluation of past theory and practice which is so necessary if our Party is to play a decisive role in the building of American socialism. It is not enough for us to recognize our mistakes and to give them a name. Nor is it enough to admit that in the past ten years we have suffered from sectarianism, that we made mistakes in overestimating the dangers of war and fascism, did not properly assess the Negro liberation movement, erroneously supported the split in the C.I.O., and pushed unrealistically for a third party. To make these admissions is perhaps its due to history, but in terms of the purposes of the present discussion, they are at best a first step only.

What has to come out by the December convention is a forthright, scientific Marxist analysis of the theoretical and organizational causes for these mistakes.

Certainly the national leadership has already begun to spell out these errors in detail and has even characterized their general nature: sectarianism. Having done this, they have not thereby exempted themselves, or the Party as a whole, from responsibility of going further, and with the help of the whole party, attempting to understand the basic organizational reasons why these errors were made by experienced Marxists, and why they were accepted and almost blindly

followed for so many years by the vast majority of party members.

If we are to avoid getting caught in a perpetual swing between extreme opportunism and extreme sectarianism, we must make every effort to avoid a pragmatic approach to our present problems: one of replacing people and slogans with other people and slogans, with little or no understanding of the objective causes for past mistakes. Already the nature of some of the discussions shows a tendency to do just this, to consider everything done in the past ten years as wrong, and therefore to do the exact opposite. If before the party was rigidly centralized, now it must be dissolved and reconstituted into a mass socialist movement. If before elaborate security measures were required, now they should all be abandoned. If before we had been super-sectarian, now we must become super-liberal.

With all the varied proposals so far voiced, no one has yet suggested that we turn to the procedure so characteristic of the methods of Marx and Lenin, and of scientific practice in general: if there is a problem to be solved, you must first go to the facts. Theory and generalization have to follow facts, as well as precede them. For too long, we in America have tended to replace this procedure with the search for all answers in Marxist classics.

This tendency to rely almost exclusively on the authority of Marx and Lenin, rather than upon a Marxist-Leninist analysis of all situations which confront us, has frequently resulted in our attempting to fit life into the framework of a set of propositions never intended by their authors as statements about America, 1956. It has further caused us to neglect the many important areas of

social science which were not dealt with in any detail by Marx, Engels or Lenin. The whole study of the phenomenon of bureaucracy, which is so pertinent to the solution of our problems today, has been given little attention by our movement, just as it was not dealt with by the classics. Bureaucracy, as a historical phenomenon has grown in importance since their day. For us to neglect it, just because it was neglected by Marx, is neither Marxist nor wise.

Lack of a scientific analysis of the general nature or organizations within our environment, for instance, is a severe handicap to us today, when we are attempting to understand just why, in the past, we have laid too much stress on centralism, at the expense of democracy in our movement. Failure to take into account the manner in which an organization's structure affects the process of policy-making within that organization is likewise caused, in our case, by a lack of a Marxist theory of the nature of organizations. Bourgeois social science has long recognized the importance of studying the operation of different types of organizations. In their case, however, this study was based not upon the desire to develop a theory which would aid in changing our environment, but rather in order to help maintain the status quo. The theory of the elite is the result of this effort.

As a consequence of the lack, in past years, of any sustained effort by our Party to encourage a detailed and many-sided study of the environment in which it operates, we find that our general understanding of many aspects of this environment is hazy, and that our practical work in many areas is unsatisfactory. Would our errors in regards to the Negro question have been made as easily if there had

been a Marxist study of the Negro in America comparable in scope and detail to Myrdal's "The American Dilemma"? To what extent was our "over-estimation of the radicalization of the masses" in 1948 due to a lack of concrete historical Marxist studies of the nature, composition, and development of the American working class?

Let us in summary agree on this: nowhere in the Marxist classics will we find answers to all of the questions that face our party. Our task is neither to be scholastic, looking constantly for the right chapter and verse, nor to abandon the basic principles and methodology of Marxism, to revise it. Rather we must attempt to mobilize the creative powers of all our members, so that collectively all will be able to make a contribution to the task of studying and understanding our problems in the spirit of Marxist factualness.

Unless we accomplish this, we will inevitably find ourselves ten years from now in the same predicament we face today. If, however, we succeed in doing this collectively, not only will we be able to develop Marxism to yet a higher level, but in the process we will have found the causes for our past mistakes and have heightened the level of theoretical activation of our rank-and-file. In so doing, we will have simultaneously accomplished the primary task of insuring a more democratic party, for democracy in any organization is a function of the level of activation of its membership.

Such an effort should begin with this discussion, but it should never be allowed to end. It is in terms of how well the present leadership succeeds in giving our present discussion this direction that it will be evaluated by history and by the party as a whole.

R. B. — Oakland

# Types of leaders—are they familiar?

In the criticism of Communist party leadership, it is good that mention has been made of the courage and self-sacrificing steadfastness of the present leadership in the trying time. It should not be forgotten as the discussion goes on.

But everyone knows something has been wrong for many years. Whatever the basic error is, it shows up most conspicuously in the type of people who are appointed or encouraged to develop the secondary leadership.

The Chinese Communists, in such pamphlets as "How To Be a Good Communist", have thought it useful

to characterize some of the worst offenders. Let's try it in the case of our own secondary leadership. Here are some of the types:

• **THE SALESMAN.** Obviously chosen for leadership because of a good record on People's World sales, etc. The party needs salesmen, but not in leadership; a salesman does not have an analytical mind. He sells himself on an idea, and thereafter it is a fixed thing.

His attitude toward a club is, "Go in there and sell 'em". The give-and-take of discussion is impossible with him. He has a fixed product to sell. There is a real gleam in his eye when

he repeats slogans and dogmas.

But change of program seriously upsets him.

• **THE PROMOTER** — the man who carries his point by the projection of his personality, not by the analytical quality of his thinking.

This is the man who shrugs off criticism by saying, "it's a personality problem", whereas it is really an ideological one. This man likes the sense of power, and talks about "control" of the membership, of a union, of a people's organization.

To get or hold control, such a person will use all the fear words ("That's

Browderism!"), lies or half-lies and the direct command toward his inferiors in rank, like a Richard Nixon.

The end result is apathy in the rank and file. He calls it "weeding out the weaker elements". He has no knowledge of Marxism, nor cares to have. His attitude toward books and thought is that of the big-business man. Perhaps he can be cured, but ego is a tenacious virus.

• **THE YES-MEN,** sometimes opportunists, but quite as often completely devoted people who lack independence of mind. They are convenient, for they don't argue. They do as they are told just as they are told, and feel they are right in so doing.

It's the easy way out for a hard-pressed administrator, but death to collective thinking. They are so hurt at independent thinking — it is so like disloyalty to them — that it is hard for a club to push through them with an idea or an objection.

• **THE LEFTIST,** a juvenile disorder based on subjectivity and some deep emotional disturbance. Such people never really hear what is said. They catch a phrase, interpret it according to their own subjective concept, lash out with emotional outrage, calling names, attempting to slay with sarcastic vituperation.

They never read objectively what is written. They read what is already in their own mind. With the usual emotional fervor, they argue some one-sided, off-beat concept, that bears no relationship to a "paintaking objective analysis" of coolly observed fact. After one or two experiences with such minor functionaries, people with good minds and steady nerves drop sadly and quietly out of activity.

• **TOUGH GUYS,** contemptuous of mental activity. Many of these from the trade unions. They think opinion is the same as thought, and experience is all that is needed. Narrow, arrogant, they solve the problem of the rank and file by ignoring its existence.

If by insistent pressure, they actually meet for discussion with a community worker, their attitude is, "You know who I am, don't you?" A serious hindrance to collective thinking, but often with good minds and good fiber, if they can be trained to use their capacities scientifically — and that presupposes a certain amount of humility.

The only type that is rarely found in leadership is the trained scientific or creative mind, though every other party in the world has used them gratefully and successfully. It would be interesting to know why this is so.

"Free elections" will not of itself solve the problem of secondary leadership. An electorate that knows exactly what it needs and wants in a functionary is a pre-requisite. This would require much objective analysis on the part of the membership.

Such a discussion could begin with a listing of characteristics which are good, as well as those which can be developed out of the material available, with special training.

Sojourner, Los Angeles

## Middle class handicap

After considerable thought and discussion around the Dennis report, I have grave doubts as to whether the party as it now stands can become the party for American socialism. In my opinion, the character and makeup of the membership and leadership must change first.

We are not a working class party, let alone the vanguard of the working class. I feel safe in guessing our membership at 80 percent lower-middle class, if not more. This was not always so. This same 80 percent were, in large part, working class in the 30s and 40s, giving active leadership in the struggles of that time.

But after World War II, many of the men returning from service did not go back to the factories but instead pursued education, or white collar and professional jobs — even little businesses. This was also true of the women pushed out of wartime jobs. This trend was given impetus by Browder's revisionism. There still remained, however, a sizeable number of Communists in the organized labor movement, particularly in the left-wing CIO unions.

Then, in subsequent years, most of the remaining Communists were isolated by a combination of reaction and our own errors.

As a result of the above most of us have made our livings in a middle class way — away from the point of production. My case is typical — a factory worker in basic industry, rank and file leader in CIO and AFL unions, fulltime organizer for a left-wing CIO union, office worker — and now a housewife.

If this isolation from the working class is true of the rank and file party membership, it is even more applicable to the leadership. They have been cut off from the working class for an even longer period. In fact, some of them have spent almost their entire lives in full-time party work. Others have given leadership in many important working class struggles. But that was long ago.

We must face the fact that we are isolated from the working class. When

Dennis continues to speak of our party as the vanguard of the working class and as capable of exerting mass influence, he has lost touch with reality. We haven't exerted any mass influence for some time. We may be devoted to what we think is in the interests of the American working class but we are not a working-class party.

Our problem is this: How can a middle-class membership build a working-class party? The answers I find are not too encouraging. If our working-class members could "call the shots" from here on out, it might be possible to rebuild our party. It is almost impossible for the habits of work of the bulk of our membership to change drastically.

We behave as though we were influencing the masses when actually we are talking to ourselves.

Take, for example, our daily press. We knock ourselves out annually using enormous amounts of energy to maintain it. But when we stop to ask, who reads our press, we find it is ourselves and a very few others.

I am not recommending that those of us who are no longer of the working class fade away. On the contrary, we can be highly useful and worthy allies in the fight for socialism. In fact, we'd be much more useful than we are today if we'd admit that we are not the ones, individually (there may be a few exceptions) or collectively to lead the American workers to socialism.

In the meantime, let's listen to the minority of workers among us like we've never listened before. And, perhaps most of all, there needs to be a reaching out to the many workers who want socialism, have been Communists in the past but didn't stay for what we are beginning to admit were, in large part, our errors, not theirs. Perhaps from a combination of these workers, a nucleus, around which to build a much broader movement, can be formed.

Some of the qualities in my opinion which a party of, by, and for the American working class and its allies must have are:

• A knowledge and awareness of

American history and tradition — our own language, our own forms. We need to understand, for example, the American educational system and its philosophers much more than Makarenko's. We need to know our own theories of medicine and human behavior before we become proponents of Pavlov. Certainly we can learn from other countries but it will be to no avail until we know our own.

• A scientific and open-minded approach, not a dogmatic one which rejects new ideas without study because they don't fit into our preconceived ones.

A few questions I'd like answers to: What is happening to the American working class? What effect does its increasing investment in property have on its character? Do the working class and the lower middle-class have more in common than in the past? Does increased monopolization of industry and agriculture along with increased automation bring socialism closer?

What does the growth in population and the rapidly increasing numbers of people over 65 years mean in Marxist terms?

• A form of organization that will in itself safeguard democracy. Major policy matters could be voted on by the membership. Minority opinions of higher bodies should be made available to the membership.

• The methods of work must adapt to the period and the situation. What normal, healthy American is going to respond year after year to one crisis after another as though each were the crisis? No party which makes its members feel guilty if they don't "give their all" (all the time) will ever make the grade in the U. S. A. There is time. Our impatience to do it all right away, our naivete in thinking we could, and our contempt for those who haven't agreed, have lost the Communist party many more members than it has retained.

There will be an American party that will lead the way to socialism. Our contribution toward it will depend on the extent to which we can change.

—C. W. P., San Francisco.

## For more and better attention to national group work

The national committee meeting has not given the necessary attention or leadership to national group work because there has not been either a full appreciation of the decisive role these groups play in our nation or an adequate understanding of the value in relation to class forces here.

We must overcome many left-overs that persisted in our ranks for many years. These erroneous ideas grew especially during the period of revisionism.

The first of these is the "melting pot" theory — the thought that national groups are a passing and very temporary phenomenon in American life; that factors and characteristics like culture, national origin, and language that draw these groups together will melt. This was the concept camouflaged by Browderism. One cannot understand the American people without understanding the role of the national groups who are important factors of this nation. We know from

experience that what draws the national groups together attracts not only the foreign born, but also the first, second, and third generation of these groups.

Another revisionist concept was the "Americanization" theory. An idea that the leadership of the trade unions, mass organizations, and even of our party, must be drawn almost exclusively from old American stock or at least from a native stock of a few generations. Because of the past influence of these false concepts of Browderism we failed to give the necessary attention to the sixteen nationality groups in America, tens of millions of foreign born, and the large number of Negro workers, who are the most typical Americans without whose contributions there would not be an America today.

We need to develop new cadres with higher understanding of the Marxist role and a higher American communist approach in the struggle

against enemy ideology in the national groups, and especially the working class. Therefore, it is necessary for us to be straight on this. National groups are a part of the American working class and the very center of our activities must be the mobilization of these groups for struggle around burning issues that face the American people. The educational, cultural, and social activities must be fitted into this central task. They can be important avenues through which these groups will be brought closer to the main arena of the class struggle.

With this in mind, we must re-examine our work in general but also specifically analyze the content of our educational and cultural activities, within existing nationality mass organizations.

We must not lose sight of the fact that very often these activities, carried on within mass organizations are not necessarily geared to the struggle of the American people. We should not

get lost, but on the contrary, as the vanguard of the working class help guide their activities toward a better understanding of their educational, political, and cultural requirements.

Comrade Dennis, in his report as to the causes for the Party's weakened base and its increased isolation, asks the question "Was the degree of isolation inevitable?" To this his answer is "no".

There is no doubt that anti-communist propaganda in this country has been very effective; but let us not throw out the practical experience of national groups in the fight against war and fascism in their native lands of Europe, South America, Asia, Africa, etc. Let us not minimize that the first to be attacked by the McCarthys were the Lincoln Brigade, the I.W.O., and the foreign born, in order to have a free hand to attack and isolate our party from the mass organizations.

J. F., Los Angeles

# Let's look at Marxist fundamentals

If we are serious, as we must be, about breaking with our dogmatism, it seems to me essential that we begin now, in the very process of our discussion, systematic re-examination of the basic principles of Marxism in the light of the peculiar conditions of the history, development and economy of the United States. Such an objective, scientific examination will assist greatly in reaching correct programmatic conclusions, and will help prevent another pendulum-swing of the type which has been so wearisomely characteristic of our past attempts at correction of errors.

I would like to suggest some areas which might profitably engage the immediate attention of real students in the field of economics, for example. (And here let's study in the painstaking, thorough way Marx and Lenin did, and let's make sure that all the available facts are examined.) Marx's classic refutation of LaSalle's "Iron law of wages" which proved that wage increases do not necessarily mean price increases has been the basis of our approach to wage questions, not only in the classroom, but also in the trade union struggle. Yet today in the United States, under conditions of monopoly capitalism, major wage increases are inevitably followed by price increases. Does Marx's law of the falling rate of profit apply to conditions in the U.S. today? What about absolute impoverishment of the working class in the U.S.? Anyone who has tried to teach classes in Political Economy is sadly familiar with these questions. I wish I were equipped myself to start some research and study on these questions. But I have never studied economics, and do not know how to analyze and study the wealth of statistics that are available in the U.S. Despite this fact, I have taught many classes in Marxist Political Economy. It is a commentary on our dogmatism that neither I nor any of the leading committees responsible for

the party schools and classes in which I taught ever considered this lack a handicap.

This re-examination of theory, I feel, must also include our theory of party organization. The two major texts which we have used as the basis of our theory of party organization are Lenin's "What Is To Be Done", and Stalin's "Foundations of Leninism." While we have recognized for many, many years that socialism is not on the order of the day for the United States, we have nevertheless built and organized our party on theoretical principles designed to meet the situation of the working class preparing for the conquest of power. This has been, in my opinion, a serious contradiction which finds its culminating expression today in our inner-party crisis.

Lenin's concept of a "party of a new type," which was further developed in a much more rigid form by Stalin, was developed in the course of a sharp struggle against the opportunism of the Second International. The political bankruptcy of the Second International which culminated in the First World War had its organizational expression in the ineffective parties of the Second International. Lenin understood that a new political situation required a new political program and a new type of party to carry out that program.

Let's stack our situation up against the situation that existed in Europe and particularly in Tsarist Russia at this time. First and foremost, a revolutionary situation existed in Russia, and in parts of Europe. The working class and all sections of the oppressed people were in ferment. The ruling class was unable to continue to rule in the old way.

This situation does not exist in the United States. There is movement and struggle in the United States, particularly exemplified by the magnificent struggles of the Negro people. But it

is still a struggle for reforms and advances within the framework of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. It is not just a question that the masses have illusions about the possibility of winning reforms and advances under bourgeois democracy. It is a fact that such reforms and advances are possible and are being achieved in many instances. Further, the ruling class in the United States still has a great deal of room in which to maneuver, to make concessions. Therefore, the fundamental political foundations which led Lenin to the creation of the "party of a new type" do not exist in the United States.

Does this mean then a simple return to the type of parties of the Second International? Definitely no. What is needed, if you please, is a new "party of a new type" based on the same kind of profound examination of our country and our situation that Lenin made for his time and the situation of his people.

An illustration which may highlight this: In the same work, "Foundations of Leninism," in which Stalin says that the Bolshevik party is the only kind of party to lead the workers to Socialism, he also says that the Soviets are the only form of government under which the workers can build Socialism. We know what difficulties were created by the dogmatic attempt to apply this analysis of Russian experience to all countries. The Peoples Democracies and China in particular have proven to us that this is not true. But in these countries they have not returned to earlier Socialist ideas about forms of government. Rather they are creating something new to meet new situations and solve new problems.

To examine further some of the basic principles of the Party as originated by Lenin and developed by Stalin:

● The monolithic party: The early history of the Bolshevik party shows

that it never became a monolithic party until after the victory of the Socialist Revolution — and the period when it became a monolithic party coincided with the beginnings of the violations of Socialist democracy in the Soviet Union. In my opinion, a monolithic party is possible only under conditions of inner-party repression, and is justified only in periods of intense class struggle. At such a time, for the duration of the struggle, the membership generally will understand the necessity for strict repression of minority views. But to carry such a concept into normal periods was revealed to be wrong in the Soviet Union. To impose this concept upon the party in the United States is a monstrosity. Again, an analogy. When a union is on strike, every honest union member, even though he may have opposed the strike before it was voted upon, considers it his duty and the duty of all union members to support the strike to a victorious conclusion. He will not tolerate strike-breaking under the disguise of the "right to dissent". But after the strike is over, when the union is functioning under normal contractual relations, the tendency upon the part of many trade union leaders to carry strike discipline over into the new situation drives workers away from the unions. In my opinion, we must reject for our party in the United States the concept of a monolithic party, as a concept which is impossible and dangerous.

● Democratic centralism: The point has been made in the discussion that we have never applied democratic centralism correctly, that there is no definition of democratic centralism in our constitution, and that very few people know what it means. It is also true that we have had centralism without democracy. But I do not believe it is sufficient to say that our mistake is that we did not apply democratic centralism correctly. Again — (Continued on back page)

## Struggle for socialism—an acid test

Dennis says in his report: "... most of the erroneous analysis and tactical mistakes our Party has made since 1945 have been chiefly of a left sectarian character. If we don't understand this, we will understand nothing about one of the main causes and effects of our isolation in this period."

I am of the firm conviction that our failure is a fundamental not a tactical failure — a failure to win or even try to develop the socialist consciousness of the American working-class. This goes way back to the days when many Communists played a leading role in the organization of the working-class but failed, in most part did not even try, to win the membership for socialism. But I do not mean to criticize that period with respect to the present — that was a high point in our work, and, even with deficiencies, far outshines the nearer past in this respect.

I think there is nothing so sterile as raising the question of socialism as a substitute for struggle on the immediate issues of the working class. But who says that it has to be this way? During the past 10 years we have, in effect and explicitly also, condemned the struggle for a socialist ideology as inimical to the struggle on immediate issues. This is not Marxism. Nor is placing the question of winning the working class to socialist ideology as something for future generations to worry about a reasonable facsimile of Marxist science. We are a Communist Party. But all our programs of the past have been based on the idea that we could build a strong Communist Party without discussing or advocating a socialist system except within the family, so to speak, or very perfunctorily elsewhere. It is as if the Abolitionists had said that it would be sectarian to demand an absolute end to slavery — sure we're for such an end — but we can best accomplish that by concentrating our attention on the struggle for improving the conditions of the slaves within their slavery — some brighter future will make it possible and correct for us to raise the question of an end to slavery.

If the Communist Party is not in the forefront of the fight for immediate issues than it contributes little to the advancement of the interests or ideology of the working class, but if it does not accept present responsibility for the development of socialist consciousness by the American working class it forfeits its proud title.

I firmly believe that it is time to have done with the expression of a pious wish for a mass Communist Party and to do something about its necessary precondition, the development of a wider socialist consciousness in the American working class. I am sure that everyone realizes that this is very much lower in 1956 than it was in 1900. No other country on the face of the globe can claim this unique distinction. Nor does the bourgeoisie deserve sole credit for this accomplishment.

Many of the errors Comrade Dennis points to have been errors indeed. But I believe that in general the solutions he presents are in the direction of converting our program into thinly disguised liberalism. To me it is as if he is saying, "Comrades, we are not making mistakes fast enough; we'll have to make them faster".

One slogan, especially, has harmed our movement and the direction of our work. It occurs in almost every article and in every party platform — the famous "Socialism is not the issue". It's a true statement but a poor slogan, not only because of its negative character, but because it has come to mean in our Party life that it is harmful to conduct socialist education among the people. We should be done with this slogan. Socialism is never the issue until the time it really is, but we can't get to that point without conducting mass education to the socialist objective.

I ask no one to get up on the trade union floor and make a fire-eating speech advocating a socialist America — that helps nothing. I ask only a systematic and responsible policy directed toward extending the influence of our basic organizations, in directing our work primarily to the struggles of

the working class, and to attempt with seriousness the winning of selected workers to the ranks of the Communist Party. In addition, we should take fuller advantage of city and county elections. In every locality possible we should establish a forum on socialism and make known the Communist position on all questions that arise on schools, and streets, on discrimination, on strike struggles, on problems of the youth, on farm parity, exploitation of our natural resources, on peace. Almost the only statements we have made lately have been when we've been attacked; we must reestablish the initiative on issues that was formerly ours.

With regard to the slogan "For a Mass Party of Socialism". I'd just as soon drop the "mass" part of it as being presently unrealistic in view of the state of our organization and tending towards phrase mongering. I would like to change the emphasis a little. For a Communist party of increased strength, influence, and membership is an attainable goal whereas, "For a Mass Party of Socialism" is a vision that prevents us from taking the necessary first step.

I believe that Comrade Dennis is correct in developing the position "we Communists should develop a more graphic picture of what American socialism would look like, what miracles of achievement it would introduce". I also think that we should more systematically and thoroughly expose the operation of the capitalist system. But we have had that before, generally correct expressions of what we should do about socialism tacked on to the end of reports. This accomplishes nothing. What is necessary is to establish the machinery of responsibility in our Party for this work. We have made statements before; now is the time to accept organizational responsibility for the fulfillment of the statement.

It is true that at this moment there is no general working class revolutionary upswing in this country. But within this general lull, within this apparent stability of capitalism, many

opportunities arise for bringing forward the socialist aim, many sharp strike and political struggles, localized if not general. And certainly the movement of the Negro people for liberation is at a high point of revolutionary activity. We can find and develop new cadre only by our participation in the struggles that do take place, only by bringing to our country the socialist solution. This lull in activity will pass and pass soon. We should prepare ourselves for that period now and not have to start from scratch when the revolutionary mood of the American people convinces even us of our historic role.

In passing, and without development, I would like to say that I am not fond of our Party's present formulation of the peaceful transition to socialism. This will fool very few in the working class with the real experience of the very sharpest struggles for yet the smallest gains into believing that we can achieve a radical dispossession of the bourgeoisie while they turn the other cheek. It can only fool us into not recognizing reality, into not making our organization a steeled and disciplined detachment of the working class.

The 20th Congress, Comrade Dennis' report, and the general pre-convention discussion seems to send everyone looking for "Emperor Norton's Treasure", looking for some combination "to end our isolation". We can look for gimmicks all we wish, the combination will always escape us. There is no golden road, no magic words we have to say to suddenly blossom forth with mass strength and influence. Especially when most of the seeking is in the direction of trying to see how much we have to water down our program to make it easy to take. We will end our isolation on the basis of the enlargement of our mass activity, by concentration in the working class, and a determined effort to extend the influence and improve the work of the party club. If there is a combination to discover, we will find it in the work of the party club.

— Sam Swing, S.F.

# Lagging behind Negro rights struggle

As part of the registration discussion I raised the following:

- The history in the Valley of lack of struggle on the Negro question.
- a. No real mass struggle around Jim-crow housing in government financed G.I. housing.

- b. This is reflected today in the fact that this section and division has not grappled with the question of mass support to the Mississippi Negro people in their fight against Southern white terror and how to mount struggle

around this issue in the white communities.

Sharp issue was taken with this however. In the absence of an evaluation of our work on the Negro question a conclusion was unable to be reached. But what happened toward the end of the meeting? A classic example of the criticism raised: the gift-lift to the Negro people of Mississippi was raised — after the gift-lift was officially over.

Here was an opportunity to give impetus and leadership to a movement with such broad support that a resolution was passed in the LA City Council calling for aid to Mississippi. We not only did not give leadership on this question, but we didn't follow when we had a golden opportunity.

I think we gravely underestimated the ramifications of this issue and this particular type of activity. What are the many ramifications?

- The obvious one which was stated at the section meeting of showing solidarity with the oppressed people of the Black Belt.

- This is the struggle of an oppressed colonial people, which we have recognized. When the people of Spain were embattled against the fascists we devoted much energy to seeing that a never ending supply of material essentials were sent to the people of Spain and within this context made the masses aware of the character of that struggle. The same occurred, though to a lesser extent, with the struggle of the Chinese people in the earlier part of their liberation struggle. On this present struggle we did not come anywhere near what the possibilities afforded.

- In our discussions last spring we recognized that the Negro people's movement is in the leadership of bourgeois reformists who are reluctant to move in a militant way. This activity was initiated by the most militant sections of the Negro leadership under the leadership of Dr. Howard, over the discomfort and reluctance of the more wishy-wash leadership. It was the first of its kind by NAACP. A tremendous showing on this question would have served to further expose the bourgeois reformist leadership to the Negro people which, during our discus-

sion last spring, we recognized as part of our task in relation to the Negro people's movement. It would also have served to strengthen the position of those elements in NAACP who pressed for a continuance of the gift-lift.

- Part of the same question of bourgeois reformist leadership of the NAACP is their reluctance to call for support in the white communities which was pointed out by Almena Lomax in the LA Tribune. Here was an opportunity to support those sections of Negro leadership who understand the need of Negro-white unity — let alone to struggle for support among the white masses, organized and unorganized, in accordance with our own understanding.

- One of the pressing needs of the immediate struggle around Negro rights is for Congressional representatives to take a stand in support of Rep. Diggs proposal to unseat the Mississippi representatives. What better way to show to the local representatives that the people would support them on this stand than a tremendous caravan of supplies to the people of Mississippi from his own constituents?

- The National Committee of the party has called for a national crusade on the question of Negro rights. The gift-life could certainly have brought the full significance of the question of Negro rights down to the white communities and would have been a key activity for the initiation of such a crusade on a community level as well as a show of support for the numerous other activities needed for such a crusade, some of which are already taking place.

- As to the county memo on Negro History Week, while it recognizes the qualitative difference in the struggle for Negro rights at this time, this difference is not reflected in the proposals in regard to Negro History Week in terms of community work. How are they different from proposals which may have been put forth last year? These proposals fall into two categories.

- a. Educational proposals: Were these proposals to be carried out on the heels of community campaigns around aid to the Negro people in Miss. they would take on a different character since educational and ideological work always takes on a different dimension when carried on in conjunction with political struggle. The necessity in concrete terms for information and education around the Negro people would be seen in addition to the abstract terms of the principles of brotherhood.

- b. The organizational proposals: The most effective way to influence organizations and city officials to proclaim and celebrate Negro History Week would be to show in a concrete manner support for the Negro people by the people in the communities. One person gave an example of a leader in an organization who, though he had proclaimed Bill of Rights Week in his organization in previous years, this year was reluctant to do so for lack of support. He personally, would have liked to do so. Had people of this type seen carloads of supplies going from their own communities to the Negro people of Miss., they would, in all probability, not have hesitated to proclaim and celebrate Negro History Week in their organizations.

- A mass campaign on this question in a white community during which it is necessary to point out the kind of oppression suffered by the Negro people in the Black Belt — both the open terror which has received some notice in the commercial press and the economic boycott by white councils which has not. In other words community education on the character of the struggle would have been a significant way of struggling against white chauvinism in white communities, another of our key tasks.

- At least once a year we hold discussion on the Negro question in which we repeatedly state that the main evidence of our own white chauvinism is lack of struggle on the question of Negro rights. Is anything more obvious than when a call for help is sent out by the terrorized embattled

(Continued on Page 7)

## Some views on the PW

This club is composed of individuals who have been members of the party at least eight years, most over fifteen years, and some over twenty years. Our conclusions are made on the basis of many years experience and work. Unanimously we agree:

- The PW should report editorials and actions of the national committee. Anything that is in the interest of the advanced progressive movement should be reported in a timely manner. (We refer to the Gates editorial in the DW calling for a mass party of socialism. The first most of us knew of this was the criticism printed in the party bulletin and voiced by the L.A. County Committee. . . because the PW did not report either on the Gates editorial or the LA County Committee protest when they occurred.)

- Do not change the identity of the PW by merger or in any other way. Welcome guest editorials and exchanges with others to make the paper broader and more many sided. We favor frequent, regular publication of the PW, even if financial problems force the editors to make the paper smaller each day. Reasons for frequent regular publication:

1. For announcements of all meetings of interest to labor, progressives and the peace movement.
2. For letters of readers while the point is still new.
3. For sparking mass campaigns requiring immediate action: political amnesty, defense of framed up Negro and labor and political prisoners and witch-hunt victims.
4. For action on bills in Congress and in state legislature committees.
5. For telegrams to Pentagon and

White House opposing trial balloons and inflammatory statements or lauding statesmanlike positions.

6 Day-by-day reportage of labor and peoples conventions (NAACP, etc.)

- Write the PW for the entire family, bringing in more material for children, youth, women on the job and in the home, more guidance material for parents, more popular articles on history and literature, both American and foreign.

This club feels very strongly that facts in the rapidly changing situation must be very carefully documented and substantiated, and that we must not pre-judge events in the Soviet Union and the socialist world. Specifically, we refer to the complex question of what happened to prominent Jewish citizens in the Soviet Union. Thus far we have not seen what it was they were accused of, whether the allegations were false or true.

We find the articles in PA too general, too long, too repetitious, too involved in style.

Since the Communist Party meets definite needs and aspirations of the American working class this club is unanimous in its opposition to any move that would cause the CPUSA to lose its identity. However, our Party should intensify and broaden its united front work.

From where did the "new currents" in the left progressive movement spring? Are these "new" elements those progressive Republicans and Democrats who have left the two old parties? Or are they composed of displaced members of the Communist and Progressive parties?

Palo Alto Prof.

## Let's look at the facts

The blanket evaluation of our past errors as left is a mistake that is seriously hampering the forward development of the present discussion.

Our left errors have been tactical ones, flowing from a right error in strategy — the neglect to root ourselves in the American workingclass as the basis of our work in all fields. Despite left phraseology after Browder, the fact remains that working-class membership, attitudes, and theory are not the predominant qualities in the American Communist party in this period.

The effect of this major, long-term error, as reflected in the work that was attempted, has been properly criticized under the headings of the "left centers" concept and sectarian attitudes toward liberal and democratic forces. But without the major perspective of an immediate return to the workingclass, discussion of these left errors has degenerated into free-for-all, with liquidation of the party as a drag on mass work raised as the major solution for all our difficulties.

A true Communist party, hoeing its own row, firm and steadfast in its workingclass orientation, would have been in a much better position in this past period to give real leadership to the nation. Instead, individuals without a real base, have been overwhelmed by the contradictions and problems of the non-workingclass mass organizations. Truly mass work — with the 60 million working Americans — has been neglected or slighted. In this we have perpetuated the basis of Browder's mistakes — the search for easier solutions to the historical problems which successful Communist movements have met and solved.

It is no reflection on the non-workingclass elements of the party, who have done such yeoman work in the

fields of peace and civil rights, to point out that had their efforts been increased tenfold, we would still be faced with the present situation. Rather, it should be pointed out that their work would have been 100 times as effective had the major party work moved properly among the working people at the same time. It is no accident that calls for the dissolution of the party should come from those who either have no workingclass roots, or who have moved away from them. The concept that mass work suffers because of Communist participation is a theory of liberalism and reformism.

At this time, the success of China should encourage us and give us leadership. After the terrible defeat that ended in the boilers of Chiang Kai Shek's locomotives, the survivors went on to rebuild the party. It was Chinese and based on the peasants — but with working-class orientation. It rallied the cultural and democratic forces — but it was Marxist, active and militant.

Are we to say that the problems posed by a decadent American monopoly are greater than those faced by the Chinese? Are we to say that the American working class — with its history of struggle from the haters "conspiracy" to the latest Westinghouse strike—is incapable of meeting the current tests? Is it impossible to build a real Communist Party in America, no matter the mistakes of the past?

Of course it will be hard. Engels marked out the major problems facing the Communists and the American working-class 100 years ago and they are the same today. We have chosen to turn our back on these facts, and now they have us flat on our backs.

In this regard, the unique contributions of Lenin and Mao should be

# Trade union mistakes—Why?

I want to state first of all that I strongly resent the 1000 word limitation recently imposed on discussion articles for the Party Forum. For the first time in my time in the party we are having open and frank discussions and in my opinion there should be no attempt to limit what anyone has to say to any specific amount of words. Too many of us have been silent in the past. Don't gag us now. Many of the rank and file of the Party are not as affluent as some of the leadership and the lack of ability to say in a few words just what they are thinking about. I suggest that you publicly retract the limitation and spend a little more money if necessary and print 8 pages instead of 4. In the east, the party (I think, although I sometimes wonder, is it the same party we are in out here in Calif.) prints a special discussion bulletin plus using pages of the Sunday Worker and there is no word limitation to the articles submitted.

Now a few words in regards to our trade union work and what I think are the reasons for many of the mistakes we have made in the past. Of all of the articles which have appeared so far, very few have dealt with this question. One, by Ben Dobbs, attempted to open discussion but I think things have to be spelled out a lot more clearly if we are to learn any lessons from our mistakes. It isn't enough to blame "left-sectarianism" for our errors and present isolation. What is meant by "left-sectarianism," what are the mistakes we made, and what should we do to prevent them being made again?

In my opinion these wrong practices and errors go back for a good many years, all the way back to 1946 when

## Questions on 20th Congress

Recognizing our responsibility for clarity to ourselves, as well as to the people who look to us for leadership, we need an immediate and thorough discussion of the reevaluation in the Soviet Union, brought to a head by the XXth Congress.

We feel, however, that such discussion must go beyond the general and that more of the facts must be brought to light. For example: details of the liquidation of Jewish organizations and the Jewish state, Birobidjan; the execution of Jewish leaders: Itisik Pfeiffer and others.

It is still unexplained except very generally how Stalin alone could have had complete control of the state police, the courts and the whole judicial system of the Soviet Union. If there are facts to be had on these important questions, let's have them.

Let's also have the answer to the question: Were the other parties outside the Soviet Union aware of what was going on inside the Soviet Union? If so, why didn't they do something about it, as the French party, through the Duclos letter, did with our party?

We self-critically admit that we blindly accepted many questionable actions of the Soviet Union, such as its negative positions in the United Nations (on Israel); also the isolating of the Yugoslav people from the Eastern Democracies.

We feel that in bringing the facts to light, as has been raised above, our press has a special responsibility.

We see no reason why information such as the closed session in the XXth Congress, and the Polish reexamination, appeared in a weekly before it was printed in either of our two dailies.

Must our press wait for an "official line" before committing itself? Our press should be capable of reacting immediately to the swift changes in the world scene and social relationships.

We ourselves, in order to meet this increased tempo, must develop more independent individual ways of work, based on mastery of Marxist principles.

H. P. Club  
Zapata Sec.—Eastern Div.—L.A.

we set up our shop and industrial clubs following the 1945 convention.

Almost at once we began adopting program and policies for the workers in the shops — without their knowledge of course — and attempted to force this program into the union. Almost overnight, the enemy of the working class became the "social democratic" and "middle of the road" union leadership. We were pretty good at calling names. All of those who opposed us were called "phonies" and "finks".

Carrying out this same strategy and using the same tactics we entered such campaigns as the 1948 Presidential election and tried to get the unions to endorse the "3rd Party" — we refused to see the handwriting on the wall in November 1948 and continued on in the same old way. We made an issue out of the "Marshall Plan" and got ourselves further isolated from the rank and file. All the time, the real enemy was the same as it had been for years — the company — but we were too busy fighting the union leadership. The workers wanted bread and butter and weren't interested in the 3rd Party, Marshall Plan, or other such issues, which we blindly continued to champion getting further and further away from the rank and file.

In 1950, during a lengthy strike in one of the basic industries, some of our comrades really learned to do rank and file work and found themselves held in great respect by their fellow workers for the job they were doing for the union in its struggle. All this good work was thrown out the window however, when, at the meeting called to announce the strike settlement, spokesmen for the left branded the settlement a "sell-out". Needless to say, this served to completely separate us from the rank and file whom we had so glibly taken for granted. We completely failed to understand, that after more than 100 days out on strike, the workers wanted to return to work and were in no mood to continue the strike any longer.

Again in 1950, at the outbreak of the Korean war, we completely underestimated the mood and sentiment of the workers and in some cases openly and brazenly flaunted their "patriotic" sentiments to their face. It was the direct result of certain acts on the part of certain comrades that fascist violence took place against the left in at least one of the shops.

Following this period, many of us who were working in the shops each day and close to the workers began to realize that our tactics and methods were incorrect, and then began a period of retrenchment. Needless to say, this realization of tactical errors was not entirely concurred in by many of those in leadership in the Party here in L.A. — especially on the division level and we continued to commit errors.

Early in 1951 when the National Negro Labor Council was formed we used our influence to induce many rank and file trade unionist and some union leaders to sign a public endorsement of the organization — a move which resulted in their being harassed by management in their respective places of work, threatened with the loss of their jobs, and in some cases — being removed from union leadership by action of their International officers. These events caused a rupture in our relationship with those forces, many of which have not been repaired to this day.

In the midst of all this came the U.S. Supreme Court decision in June 1951 and most (in fact, all) of the full time leadership in our industrial setup went into hiding. We (those of us who were working in the shops) who were apparently considered expendable, were left to take the brunt of the attack of the reactionary forces head-on. Many of our forces couldn't take it — some capitulated to the enemy, some simply quit the job and took off for other places — some who tried to fight back suffered "nervous breakdowns" and were out of the plants for many months, and in some cases never returned.

The comrades in the forefront of the attacks knew that things couldn't continue as they were — changes had to be made — but when we attempted to take a different approach we dis-

covered that the "absentee" leadership was still in control, operating through a third person so to speak, and "analyzing" the situation from afar and issuing "directives" telling us what we had to do and how to do it. In some cases when the shop comrades attempted to make their differences known they were pretty severely dealt with — in some cases removed from club and section leadership and in some cases even temporarily removed from all Party activity under the guise of "security." In the case of one branch of the industrial setup, the entire section was abandoned by the top leadership for a period of nearly 2 years and only managed to hold itself together as a party organization through the self-discipline of its membership which continued to meet and pay dues regularly — even though as I said, the organization had no contact with any body from a division level on up for at least 2 years. During this time a national convention of the union involved was held and a great many problems arose in which the left forces could have played a much more dominant role if they had been getting the kind of leadership they should have been getting.

Later, when the leadership which had left in 1951 returned, in many cases it was immediately placed in charge of the work again despite a three year lack of contact. In many cases, without regard for the problems of the comrades involved, drastic changes were made in the club and section leadership mainly on the insistence of the "returned" leaders who very bureaucratically demanded the changes with little or no discussion. In some cases the comrades who were removed without sufficient explanation became very bitter and withdrawn, some comrades practically dropped out of all party activity for a long period following the action. It must be recognized that the situation in the party was such that many of those who were not fully in accord with the proposed changes did not feel free to express their opposition. The changes were made in every case to "correct" a situation in which the party apparently was not growing. In nearly every case it was some "individual" who was in some way held to be responsible for the lack of growth or for the failure of the program to take hold. At no time was it considered that the program might be wrong or that the objective situation growing out of our past errors could be a possible cause — no individuals had to be changed, but always on a club or section level — the bureaucratic division leadership remained the same.

These are the kinds of "Left-sectarianism" mistakes I think we are talking about. These are the things I think we must agree were wrong. If we can come to a common understanding as to what our errors were, we can and will begin to make advances. In the past, when we tried to discuss our work, every comrade who spoke on errors and weaknesses always justified

these mistakes by saying, "but at the same time certain positive things were accomplished." In truth, each evaluation showed that the errors were offsetting the gains and we were slipping further and further into isolation. I don't think that the errors of the past can be glossed over. It is because of them that we have to spend time on this discussion today, and once and for all we have to root them out and take steps to guarantee that they won't be made again.

In my opinion, one of the things which has to come out of this discussion period is a guarantee that active shop workers are made a functioning part of division, county, and state leadership bodies. Ways must be found in which these comrades who are closest to the point of production (and consequently, exploitation), have a voice in the setting of policy in which they have the most to lose if the decisions are incorrect.

We must make our leading bodies, especially section and division, collective organizations and end once and for all any further one man leadership bodies. In this regard I think our whole concept of democratic-centralism has to be overhauled. We have had far too much centralism and too little democracy.

I think that we must maintain our present shop and industrial club setup. It is absolutely essential that our union forces be closely related and not scattered in different organizations all over the county. Despite our past mistakes we cannot now make the mistake of "throwing out the baby with the bath water."

A Los Angeles Trade Unionist

## Some changes suggested

The P.W. be changed to a weekly with a Marxist interpretation of major struggles and questions and a socialist perspective. It should have a popular form. Its purpose should be to develop the road to socialism in the U.S. It should have a cultural page, sports and humor. This will fully answer our present needs and we will be able to sell it.

The bulletin should be continued after the convention as a form for ideological struggle.

Our structure should be changed to allow for more regular caucuses on a county scale, where possible, of people in the same fields of work.

Our organization must be less unwieldy and expensive, allowing time for party functionaries to engage in mass work and mass workers to function in the leadership.

Our dues schedule should be immediately revised with those earning above \$100 having an increase in relation to those below.

The National Committee should make no major policy changes without participation of the membership.

Industrial Sec.  
Northern Division  
Los Angeles

## More about Negro struggle

(Continued from page 6)

heroes of the South that whole sections of our party do not rally to the call?

The level of the struggle around Negro rights in the white communities would have been raised if we had carried on in such a manner. Our aim is not, as one person put it, to be 'good Joes' in a broad mass movement. Our aim is to raise the level of struggle among the people. And, as has been said by our leaders, of prime importance in this respect is to grasp the opportunities as they present themselves.

In view of this I think we must be severely critical of ourselves. We cannot look at this as just another thing that we missed the boat on or just another method of struggle among numerous other methods, as another person put it. This kind of struggle, both on this and other issues, is key to the other phases of our work — our mass organization work, our work around pressuring electoral candidates to take stands on issues — as I have tried to illustrate under the specific points

raised, not to mention the effect it would have on our PW sales. If we do not get these opportunities handed to us it is up to us to explore ways of initiating this type of mass political activity.

We have not given leadership to this kind of work for many years, due mainly to the objective conditions under which we were working prior to Geneva, but if we are to take advantage of the qualitative change effected by Geneva, we must also effect a qualitative change in our work. The opportunities are there for us to give leadership and to raise the level of the struggles around the issues of the day without isolating ourselves from the people. On the contrary we will never overcome our isolation any other way. For it is only when we prove ourselves to the people as capable of giving them this kind of leadership that they need to express themselves politically will they refuse to listen to the attempts of the red baiters to isolate us.

— Valley Div., Los Angeles

# Dennis' report found wanting

Eugene Dennis' report, Section II, "A Critical Review of the Party's Work", finds that the party is isolated because we have made a number of "errors in judgement and tactical mistakes."

If we don't understand that the mistakes were left-sectarian, Comrade Dennis says, "we will understand nothing about one of the main causes and effects of our isolation in this period."

In my opinion, Dennis' analysis is neither scientific nor critical. Mere recognition of errors in no way explains the reason for the party's isolation. It is necessary to examine and understand the reason for the errors.

Dennis has been too hasty in throwing off an examination of the "basic, deep-seated and long standing weaknesses" of the party. It is here that we must look for the reason for our isolation which is more the cause than the effect of our errors.

All science must begin with an examination of the objective facts. We have usually done just the opposite. We start with our "line" or criticism and then tailor the facts to fit. In economics for instance, we started with the conclusion that there must be a crisis and then selected only those facts which would substantiate such a thesis. In politics, we decided that a people's party is essential and then looked for examples to prove that large segments of the population were breaking away from the Democratic party. Today we decide that the "Cadillac Cabinet" must go and then we talk in terms of "groundswell" movements.

In examining the position and direction of the party today, the single objective fact to keep in mind is the utter and absolute isolation of the party. There may be a few examples of individual Communists who are not isolated, but there is no area where the Communist party itself, as a party, as a social force, has any influence. If there are such examples they should be broadcast so we can all examine them and mold the rest of the party to that pattern.

The question could be raised, "if the party has no influence, why the bitter attacks in the last five years?" I believe that the facts will show that the Dept. of Justice needed a scapegoat in order to attack the Bill of Rights and chisel away at the economic and democratic gains the people made under the New Deal. It wasn't necessary for the FBI to isolate us from the masses. We had already effectively isolated ourselves by 1951.

It is in the objective conditions that

we must seek the cause of our isolation and not in the subjective factors of "incorrect judgement and tactics."

Incorrect tactics could hinder the party in one specific field or another but could not cause our total isolation. If we suffered from isolation because of these errors in judgement, it was not because of the errors themselves, but because of the manner in which we attempted to jam these incorrect judgements down everyone's throats. For example, our attempt to jam our estimate of the Soviet Union down the throat of friend and enemy alike.

The objective fact is that our party has always been isolated except in periods and areas of acute class struggle. We have never learned to consolidate our position during times of lull in the class struggle. We refuse to recognize objective situations and keep trying to force the masses to accept what we consider to be the correct line for them.

Another example of unscientific, un-Marxist arrogance is Dennis' criticism that we have "failed to move masses." The party does not, and should not try to "move masses". Masses move when they are good and ready, when their personal experiences have convinced them that it is time to move. We, here in America, cannot even move with the masses, let alone move them.

Even Dennis' evaluation of the three major errors in judgement are fuzzy, unclear, and undialectical. In each case he presents an analysis which states that our line was originally correct, but "on the other hand", "at certain times" it became incorrect.

There may be all sorts of intricacies and ramifications to a particular line, but dialectically and in the long run it must be characterized as either correct or incorrect. There is no doubt that there was real danger of war. There is no doubt that there was a real threat to American civil liberties. And therefore, in my opinion, our main line was correct even if our method of application was entirely incorrect.

The foregoing criticism of the Dennis report has obviously not answered any of the questions before us. The attempt has merely been to phrase clearly the main question: "Why are we isolated?"

For this writer, the first question to be resolved is whether the party . . . which Lenin described and fought for in Czarist Russia in 1903 . . . is now or ever was applicable to the United States.

George Jay, S.F.

## Facts wanted

(Continued from page 1)

are way ahead of the leadership.

Khrushchev's secret report was kept a secret from the membership and now it is becoming an open secret. The national leadership has done a great injustice to the membership of the party. There are a great number of people today who refuse to believe this is Khrushchev's report because the Soviet Union hasn't released it. They question the motivations of the State Dept. in releasing it and rightly so. Is this the way to open the door to freedom of discussion and availing the people of all the facts? I think not. This helps to suppress discussion in our ranks. How is this different from the way Stalin conducted himself, except that it is being done by a collective group?

The words I quoted by Mac Weiss are good sounding democratic words, but when is the leadership going to allow us to become an informed membership? When is the leadership going to release the differing opinions that are taking place, in printed form? No other way is satisfactory.

This is the first time I have written a letter and I will continue to write more. I hope people will sit down and put their thoughts down on paper. I know most of us are shocked at what has been revealed about socialist democracy and civil liberties. We may not have many answers at this point, but we sure do have plenty of questions. These questions should be expressed if we are going to arrive at any answers.

E. W.—San Gabriel Valley

## Fundamentals

(Continued from page 5)

referring to Stalin, the Bolshevik Party is not just the sum total of the party organizations, but is a system of party organization, with strict subordination of the minority to the majority, and strict subordination of lower bodies to higher bodies.

I believe that the term "democratic centralism" should be junked, because in itself it is a foreign and objectionable term to the people of the United States, it repels and frightens them. But more than that, I am opposed to the concept of democratic centralism, under any name. It has been said that bourgeois organizations (and, parenthetically, many trade unions) are more undemocratic than our party is. But it is precisely this lack of democracy that repels many thousands of people from these organizations. The chief complaint of the average mother about PTA is that it is so undemocratic — and certainly one of the factors impeding the growth and development of trade unions and undermining the loyalty of many workers to their unions is the continuing, undemocratic practice in these unions. Our country is a big country, with many diversified areas, each with its own traditions, and its own specific relation of forces operating within the general relationship of forces on a national scale. Further, we have a national tradition of democracy, mutilated as it has been in recent years. The party of socialism in this country, it seems to me, must serve as a model of democratic functioning. The essence of this is not the size of leading bodies but the right and

# We need a party Bill of Rights

In Dennis' recent report to the Central Committee he calls for a re-evaluation of our work in the past ten years. He then lists what he deems to be our main theoretical errors which led in large part to our present sad state of declining membership and extreme isolation from the masses of the people in our country.

It is not the intent of this brief commentary to discuss the validity of this or that proposition of Dennis on the war and fascist dangers, the Negro question etc.; although they are subjects worthy of intensive discussion.

I believe that Dennis misses the heart of the problem confronting all of us. That problem is: why virtually the entire history of our party has been one of basic theoretical and practical errors of both, a left-sectarian and right-opportunist character.

Prior to the last ten years were the several years of Browder revisionism. In the thirties, despite our pioneering practical leadership in many bitter unemployed and union organizational struggles, rigidity in theory prevailed. Socialist propaganda was based on what life would be like in a Soviet America, virtually all theoretical propositions on the national question were mechanical replicas of formulas that were applied under vastly different historical circumstances etc. We failed to grow significantly, both ideologically and organizationally in the conditions of ferment and struggle in the depression thirties.

In the twenties, Lovestone and his theories of American exceptionalism flourished; in short the entire history of our party has been a history of narrow, dogmatic interpretations of Marxism-Leninism of both right and left deviations.

Our correct, fruitful work has taken place sporadically within the general framework of our erroneous concepts and tactics.

The fact that we live in the strongest and wealthiest imperialist nation in the world, has, of course an enormous bearing on our difficult situation, past and present. Marx referred to the process of enslaving the minds of American workers and binding them to capitalism with "golden chains". Lenin spoke of the capacity of the ruling class of our country to "bribe, deceive, etc., unequaled anywhere in the world." In addition to all the other powerful propaganda media, 50,000,000 TV sets blanketing our nation serve as an ideological weapon in the hands of big business of enormous potency.

We are a small, weak party, ideologically and politically immature as compared with the great parties of France, Italy, let alone the countries of Socialist economics.

It is a matter of fact, that through the years, the doubts and class instincts of many of our working class comrades sensed the errors of the leadership but never found channels for expression in the stifling bureaucratic atmosphere that prevailed in our party. And it still does. And in fact they were often times ruthlessly pushed aside and squelched when they 'dared to question official policy'.

Our leaders have in many cases forgotten the most elementary principles of Marxism contained in those beautiful words of Lenin's: "Before one can teach the masses one must first learn from them."

Before one can learn from the masses one must be close to them.

In order to be close to the people the forms of organization and methods of work must be geared for democratic relationship.

Our basic source of theoretical errors is that we have bureaucratically generalized our own narrow, limited, subjective experiences instead of the broad experiences, ideas and traditions

ability of local bodies to determine policy for themselves in the light of their local conditions. Once this has been established, one form or another of leading bodies, structure, etc., can be adopted depending on circumstances. Without this, we can make all sort of changes, and they will still be window-dressing for an essentially undemocratic principle of organization.

E.S., 24th CD, L.A.

(Concluded next issue)

of the working millions of our country. These are reflected in the contributions of our comrades who live and work in the mainstream of American life every day.

As long as we continue to permit this state of affairs we will continue to find ourselves in the doldrums.

A broad, flexible policy leading towards greater democracy, peace and ultimately Socialism in our country, can only stem from a broad, democratic political organization steeped in the traditions of our great country.

This can only be achieved by a series of bold strokes of political surgery on our ailing party. We must declare war on all forms of dogmatism, and above all, the stifling bureaucracy in which it thrives, like a malignant cancer.

This must amount to nothing less than a political bill of rights for our entire membership.

It is not enough for Dennis to say that there must be the right to hold dissenting minority views. Rights can become meaningless unless they are spelled out and codified into law as basic rights and duties of party members — and that can be enforced.

I believe that a set of party rules must be adopted at this coming convention and made the full property of our members.

This should include not only the right of dissenting opinion, but also the establishment of bulletins, letter columns, etc. where these opinions can find expression. It should also spell out the right and duty to practice criticism and self-criticism on questions of policy and conduct of all party bodies and individual members up to and including the central committee.

Further, committees of trusted comrades elected from the ranks should have the right to examine the work of higher party bodies at conferences held at every level every several months.

It must be the duty of leadership at all levels to attend branch meetings as regularly as conditions permit and to maintain or to establish ties with mass organizations and non-party forces on a regular basis. This must be an obligation that must be fulfilled. A leadership without mass ties and influence is incapable of formulating correct policies tied to the daily life of our people.

A body of penalties as severe as those we have exercised against white chauvinists must be formulated to apply to hard hearted callous bureaucrats who tear at the vitals of our membership and who are the deadliest enemies of our party and socialism no matter what their subjective estimate of themselves may be.

Finally we must put an end to the general practice of 'coopting' people to high and low posts, right and left, and selecting people for office from prepared lists.

Lack of experience will be more than compensated for by the well of untapped initiative from below. Except in cases of legitimate security, the election principle must prevail at all levels.

We must recognize that inherent in democratic centralism is the ever present danger of bureaucracy and centralization leading to the destruction of inner-party democracy.

All our humanist democratic teachings will be of no avail unless we establish an inner party Bill of Rights which members can have, hold and exercise until it becomes a deep seated tradition which no power loving bureaucrat will be able to shake loose.

We could well learn from the many centuries of struggle which led to the Bill of Rights, that democratic legal safeguards are needed in our party as well as in society as a whole.

When we formulate our theories and programs in such a healthy and democratic party environment we shall then, and only then, have a correct party worthy of the name.

D. C.—Minor, Los Angeles

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