In the CPO Pre-Convention Discussion

The Major Issue Facing Our National Convention

By JAY LOVESTONE

WHEN our last convention was meeting, the corridors of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern had been scarcely swept, the full text of all the resolutions adopted was not yet available to us, and the new "general line" laid down for the various Communist Parties could only be seen in its contours. We did not hesitate to greet the signs of a break with leftist sectarianism. Likewise, we did not hesitate to point out the extremely serious dangers inherent in the new turn—towards the far right. Since those sultry days of 1935, the line of the Seventh Congress has been fully unfolded. We now have months of experience as well as years of theory and practice to aid us in our more definite evaluation of the present course of the Comintern.

But it will not be out of place to dispose of a few so-called secondary phases of the main question before arriving at a conclusion. We say secondary not because we consider these elements unimportant, but merely because many do not see their direct relationship with the primary, with the basic question.

Many comrades and readers will recall that we have repeatedly emphasized that a political party of the working class can not have, for long, a false political line without sooner, much rather than later, adopting a wrong trade union line. Furthermore, we have gone out of the way, time and again, to stress that the ultra-right line of the Comintern and its sections is in itself even more harmful to the Communist parties and, therefore, to the labor movement than was the now fortunately demised ultra-left line. That this is so, is clearly evident from the fact that today, in the "People's Front" period the C.I. is subject to considerable rightward pull from mass organizations to the right of it. On the other hand, the "Third Period," when the C.P. was ultra-left crazy in its tactics, when it branded bona fide unions as company unions, when all those who refused to do homage to Stalin and his shadows were at best "social-fascists," there were no mass organizations of labor to the left of the C.I. to pull it still further to the left.

Widening of Gap

It is in no small measure on this score that we sincerely warned against the line of the Seventh Congress being carried out to its logical conclusion as a break with the principles of communism in regard to the Marxist-Leninist teachings about the state and imperialist war. Moreover, it is because we were so anxious to do everything in our power to check the ultra-right course and to do our share in aiding the Comintern to return finally to a sound Leninist strategic course that we spared no pain or effort, right after the Seventh Congress to seek communist unity on only one condition—the restoration of party democracy thruout the sections of the CI. To our regret we must state frankly that events since the Seventh Congress have widened and not narrowed the gap between us and the Comintern. The very nature of the People's Front line, the manner in which the ultra-left line was dropped, the evolution of the un-communist outrageously reformist course replacing the theory and practice of social fascism and union-splitting, the increasingly harmful effect of the People's Front line on the new trade union policies of the CP, the combination of some of the most reprehensible features of the old line of ultra-leftism with the mania of people's frontism—are all important factors accounting for the sharpening of differences between us and the CI sections everywhere.

Here it is necessary to point out that, thruout the months which have elapsed since the Seventh Congress, we of the CPO have done everything possible to work together, in the most comradely manner, on a common constructive program in the mass organizations of labor—particularly in the trade unions. We hoped that such collaboration especially in the trade unions would help remove some of the bitterness that had been generated in the preceding years of faction conflict; we hoped thus to help the comrades of the C.P. learn how to discard their destructive methods of work, how to discontinue their attempts to transfer mechanically tactics from one country to another, to break with the practice of seeking to dominate and domineer mass organizations thru intrigue and manipulations. We do not regret a single step we have taken in this direction. Our convention should confirm this course and we should continue it with redoubled energy—despite the fact that all too often the CP has gone out of its way to make it impossible for such collaboration to materialize. In fact, it has been, generally speaking, only in those unions where the CPO forces were strong enough to insure collaboration that the CP has permitted or tolerated it to some satisfactory extent.

Trade Union Opportunism

In the auto situation, in the knitgoods workers' ranks, in the work among the unionized teachers, among some building trades sections, we have been treated to significantly inspiring development of painful proof of the fact that the CP cannot for long continue to have a wrong political line without falling into a messy trade union situation. It would be neither palatable nor advisable to recite details in regard to the above-mentioned organizations and their problems. The workers who are members of these unions have painful knowledge of the truth of our contention. Carrying the line of the People's Front into the unions, CP members have desperately but systematically sought to form blocs with all sorts of unsavory elements, with rankest reactionaries—so long as they endorsed some party auxiliary or so long as they were ready to play ball in such a fashion as to aid CP members or followers win or get union posts. Only to the exent that the progressive forces have been strong enough, only in unions where we have had a sufficiently strong cadre of CPO forces with a highly experienced leadership have the CP members been drawn into some degree of effective collaboration on a sound program for union building. An example of this is the situation in Local 22. However, in those unions where the progressive forces, where the CPO ranks are weak, or where the CP members or followers already have the leadership of the unions, there we find a woefully different situation—either no effective collaboration or none at all.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that, nevertheless, none of these malpractices of the CP—malpractices which grow out of the very nature of the line of the party as well as the very nature of its inner organization regime—should make us waver for one moment from our course of seeking collaboration on the basis of a correct program of strengthening and building militant unionism with all forces in the unions regardless of the political belief or affiliation of the workers involved. This has been the policy of our group since its inception. This policy assumes additional importance especially because of the confusion of and gyrations by the CP in its attitude towards and evaluation of the CIO.

Face the American Scene

As to our future relationship with the Comintern, as to our attitude towards the social democratic parties and their Second International, I believe the draft resolution adopted at our last national conference should be finally endorsed. The events in Spain and France, the debacle suffered by the class conscious forces of labor in our last presidential election have further confirmed its essential soundness. The main problem with which our convention will have to grapple is the new and evermore in the American labor movement. Here we will deal primarily with the international, as well as American, import of the CIO as the foundation of a new stage in the growth of the consciousness, militancy, and prowess of our working class. Here there may be involved more than one challenge to one fetish or another which some or all of us have worshipped or been oppressed by at one time or another in the course of our activities in the labor movement. There is much to re-examine as well as examine.

Objective and critical in our theoretical approach, practical and flexible in our tactical practice, free from dogma, devoid of all blind loyalty to the fetishism of person or premise, we cannot but make ourselves more effective workers in helping lay a sound foundation for a vigorous labor movement. This is the big need of the entire American working class. This is the big job for those who want to be worthy of **being** (as well as being called by themselves and others) communists. Here is the pivotal point of our coming convention and of the future of our organization and movement.

Fraternal Greetings

to American labor on May First in celebration of the great gains and far-reaching progress in organizing the unorganized and exploited toilers of this land.

DOLL AND TOY WORKERS UNION

LOCAL NO. 18230 **A. F. of L.**

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A. ESPOSITO, Manager

E. DIANA, President

TRADE UNI

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THE drive against the Wa begun with amazing spee validate certain features whic of labor, and secondly, to so i Act as to make it a burden strikes have been enjoined bec to the satisfaction of an unwil numerical majority of the w Wagner Act has been used against labor and the CIO. The National Manufacturers Association has come out with a statement insisting that the Act does not outlaw "plant unions"—a nice name for company unions.

"No legitimate organizations," says the N.A.M., **"confined to the plant or any freely chosen employee representation plan is outlawed. If the employees prefer an organization confined to the plant for the purpose of collective bargaining, it is their right to form one and deal with their employer through it."**

Hopes that the Wagner Act will automatically outlaw company unionism will prove as ill-founded as in the case of the NIRA. Under the interpretation of the N.A.M. Loft's has just established a company union thruout its chain and is recruiting energetically.

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The executive council of the A. F. of L., in session in Washington has taken one more step to estrange itself from the decisive sections of American labor. It denounced the CIO to the manufacturers and the government as **"steeped in the cesspool of illegality and irresponsibility,"** and laid plans for a conference in Cincinnati on May 18 where plans for a **"stop the CIO drive"** will be discussed.

Questioned about the admission into the A. F. of L. of the infamous "blue card" organization (a company mob) of mill and smelter workers in Galena, Kansas, Green backed water on a previous positive statement and pleaded ignorance. In the **Times** of April 20 Louis Stark dispels all doubt about the character of this organization by stating that the "union" is **"alleged by conciliators of the Department of Labor to be a company union."**

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Even as Green was mouthing "unity" talk his man-Friday Dillon was busting up the Georgia Federation of Labor, which in the majority supported the CIO at its state convention last week. The supporters of the A. F. of L. **withdrew** and set up a dual organization.

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The state legislature this week defeated the Wadsworth Bill which called for financial accounting of