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CONTENTS

A Reply to Comrade Hansen, By M. Morrison	Page 1
A Letter from M. A.	13
The Frankel Article and Our Polemical Method By James Campbell	15
Statement Read to N. Y. Membership Meeting On Censure (July 13, 1944) By Sylvia Rainer.	18
Two Tendencies In Chicago By Ken Hayes, Chicago Branch Organizer.	20
On the Communist Party During the Past Year By Lou Cooper	29

A REPLY TO COMRADE HANSEN

by M. Morrison

Comrade Hansen's article against Morrison is important only because there is revealed in it, by implication, the kind of a party that Hansen and those who agree with him would like to see our party develop into. Everyone in the party can now begin to think in terms of two concepts of a party, the one implied by Hansen, the other by Morrison. But I shall treat this most important point at the end. I must first deal with other aspects of Hansen's article.

Hansen's Central Thesis

What is Comrade Hansen's central thesis? I must admit that, whenever I am confronted with a difference of views, I insist on trying to find the main issue and then the arguments supporting the opposing viewpoints. What are the precise differences? What are the propositions the opponents stand for? What arguments do they advance to support their propositions and to attack those of the opponents? These are the questions I invariably ask when confronted by an argument.

It is not an easy matter to discover the central thought of Hansen's article. It is characteristic of loose thinking that it does not state the issue clearly and exactly. Words flow on and on in Hansen's article and one is not stopped by any central thought, clearly expressed, around which the article is constructed.

But there is a central idea, not explicitly expressed but implied. It is, that Morrison is creating or represents an opposition which is hostile to Bolshevism (at present the organizational side of Bolshevism). Hansen and those for whom he speaks represent the true concepts of Bolshevik organization.

For anyone to come to any decision on the correctness or incorrectness of Hansen's central theme it is essential to examine the incidents that led to this controversy. Logically, it might seem better first to give one's concepts of a Bolshevik party, but that would not be very helpful in this case. We must first proceed to examine the incidents that have resulted in the controversy. Hansen has risen to the defense of Bolshevism because I have attacked certain procedural ideas and practices. What are these ideas and practices; does my attack on them constitute a danger to Bolshevik organization, as is contended by Hansen?

The Correct Approach to Questions of
Bolshevik Organizational Procedure

An article entitled "How the Trotskyists Went to Jail", written by Hansen, was published in the F.I. I was informed about the article and told that many party members were disgusted with it. I could say nothing about it at that time since I had no chance to read it. Then I was sent Macdonald's criticism of the article and I felt that it was necessary to answer his contention that leader-worship is a necessary product of Bolshevik organizational concepts. To defend Bolshevism against Macdonald it was necessary, in my opinion, to meet his charge that Hansen's article revealed a tendency to leader-worship. Morrison wrote a letter to our press attacking Macdonald and mildly criticizing Hansen. As is known, Morrison's letter was refused publication.

Involved in this incident are the following questions: (1) Does Morrison's criticism of Hansen's article as showing a tendency to leader-worship constitute a deviation from Bolshevik organizational principles? (2) Is Morrison's insistence on the publication of his letter attacking Macdonald and criticizing Hansen a deviation from Bolshevik organizational principles? It must be remembered that Hansen claims that Morrison and those who agree with him are deviating from Bolshevik organizational principles. Is there anything in Morrison's attitude to Hansen's article that is hostile to Bolshevik organization principles? Must one agree that Hansen's article is a good article and must one insist that no public criticism of Hansen is permissible in order to be a good Bolshevik? It is obligatory on Hansen and his guides to answer these questions clearly and state wherein Morrison has violated Bolshevik organizational principles in his attitude on the Hansen article.

The comrades must pose and answer the following questions: (1) Where in the history or ideas of Bolshevism does it appear that an article of the type Hansen wrote in the F.I. must be accepted as good Bolshevism? (2) Where does it appear that those who are ashamed of such an article must keep quiet? I hold the contrary; that this article could not possibly have appeared in a theoretical organ of the Bolshevik party; that if it had, the writer and all those responsible would, as a minimum, have received a severe tongue-lashing by Bolsheviks like Lenin and Trotsky.

Then came the New York membership meeting where four comrades were censured for participating in a discussion with some W.P. members. To me the censure was not important. The issue involved in this meeting was, as I saw it, whether or not it is in agreement with Bolshevik ideas and practices to prohibit our members from discussing with members of an opponent organization. That question, apparently, has now been settled because, after the discussion, all the participants stated propositions with which everybody agreed. A fair inference, however, from Hansen's attack on Morrison is, that to say "it is wrong for the party to prohibit members from discussing with W.P. members" is a violation of Bolshevik procedure. The question that the members must ask is; Is

the proposition enunciated by Morrison with reference to discussion with members of opponents' organizations contrary to anything that Bolshevism has taught? Morrison has made his position on this point clear in the discussion involving this question.

The third point of difference arose on the question of publishing Farrell's letter in the F.I. I contend that it should be published on the basis of the following proposition: When a friend of the party writes a letter or an article for our party press, criticizing the form or contents of any article appearing in our press, it should be published with a reply from the author of the article criticized. If a serious question is involved the editorial board can also intervene in the argument. Is that position contrary to the traditions and spirit of Bolshevism? Is it Bolshevism if one follows a policy of throwing into the waste basket critical articles by a friend of the party?

Let Hansen say clearly; what in the proposals or attitude of Morrison with reference to the three incidents cited above is in violation of Bolshevik tradition? It is not sufficient to say that Morrison is wrong on this or that question; in addition to being wrong Hansen must show that Morrison's position is contrary to Bolshevism. Hansen has, of course, not attempted to define the issues and say clearly what in Morrison's proposals or attitude constitutes a deviation from Bolshevism. The party members must do what Hansen has not done.

My method of approach is totally different from that of Hansen. That method is exemplified in my comments on the educational proposal. I mentioned the first two incidents referred to above and stated that the P.C. majority, by its attitude, has introduced Stalinist germs into our party. I did not accuse anyone of being a Stalinist; I said that certain practices and ideas peculiar to Stalinism have penetrated into the party and I urged the members to beware of them and reject them.

Now everybody knows that two or three or four germs, even as deadly as Stalinist ones, are not very dangerous. To be dangerous they must multiply to a considerable number. But it is necessary to be on guard even against three or four germs; it is necessary to destroy them before they multiply.

Hansen accuses Morrison of having a thesis, namely, that Stalinist methods are growing in our party, and because Morrison has this thesis he must look for something to support it. But anyone who can read and wants to understand can read all that Morrison has written and see that all that Morrison says is, that such and such a procedure in such and such a case is Stalinist in character. Morrison does not build a theory and look for incidents to prove his theory. He observes incidents and warns against the actions of the P.C. He does not want to draw the conclusion of the existence of a tendency. He is working on the hypothesis that these incidents are minor episodes which will not leave a trace on

the party if the members become aware of the danger. Morrison is perfectly willing to argue the question whether he is right in characterizing the actions of the P.C. on the various questions as Stalinist; Morrison is perfectly willing to argue whether he is right in his criticisms. But he is not prepared to argue whether he is correct on a thesis ascribed to him by Hansen, for the simple reason that he has no such thesis.

It is Hansen who, on the basis of Morrison's criticism, has evolved a theory, that Morrison and those who agree with him are not good Bolsheviks. How does he support this theory? Not by showing that Morrison's particular proposals or central propositions with reference to the three incidents mentioned before are violations of the traditions of Bolshevism but by unwarranted inference, by stupid reasoning and, I am sorry to say, by distorting statements made by Morrison in the course of his argument.

I do not hesitate to say now that if the ideas and practices of the P.C. majority, which I have criticized, continue and if more of the same type of practices and ideas are introduced, I shall not hesitate to say that a definite tendency has appeared in the party. On the basis of three or four more or less minor deviations from Bolshevik procedure, I am not ready to formulate any theory, but I may be compelled to do so if a greater number and more serious deviations occur.

A New Amalgam

Although Hansen's failure to touch on the real issues involved in the controversy and his inability to reason clearly and logically deprives his attack of any value, it is nevertheless necessary to deal with the more important of the innumerable errors and stupidities that clutter up his article. I haven't the time nor space to deal with all of them.

Let it first be noticed that a method used frequently by Stalinists, but not exclusive to them, is utilized by Hansen -- the method of amalgam. Morrison, Lydia Bennett, Macdonald, Farrell are all jumbled together. What Morrison says is supposed to lead to Bennett's conclusions; what Morrison and Bennett say are supposed to derive from the same theory that Macdonald and Farrell advance. True, it may not be an intentional amalgam -- simply a result of gross confusion. But I want to warn inexperienced members to be on guard against the method of amalgam.

Although I have not read Comrade Bennett's article I am certain that she stands for the kind of a party that I stand for -- a real Bolshevik party. I do not know whether I can support all of her arguments but, unless she has, unbeknown to me, suddenly changed her views, my attitude to a Bolshevik party is substantially the same as her attitude.

But what have Macdonald and Farrell to do with the case? Their views on Bolshevism are not the issues in this discussion. Their actions in writing something may have precipitated the controversy, but not their views. Is that so fine a distinction

that Comrade Hansen is unable to recognize it?

Is it because I wanted to defend Bolshevism against Macdonald that the vague suggestion is carefully hinted at that I share his opinion about Stalinism being a product of Bolshevism? It is not very difficult to defend Bolshevism against Macdonald and those who think like him. Unfortunately, it is an article like Hansen's "How the Trotskyists Went to Jail" that furnishes the Macdonalds with plausible but false arguments. Unfortunately, it is the refusal to publish a critical letter by a friend of the party that furnishes plausible but false arguments to the Macdonalds. Why are they false? Because such an article as Hansen's or such an action as refusing to publish Farrell's letter are in contradiction to the true spirit of Bolshevism. Philistines can sneer at the idea that Bolshevism has an emancipating, proud and confident spirit, but I shall continue to say it over and over again.

The stupid thinking that Hansen is guilty of, in connecting Macdonald with Morrison, can best be shown by reducing his argument to a syllogism. (1) All critics of Bolshevism say that Stalinism is a product of Bolshevism. (2) Morrison is a critic of Hansen's article. (3) Therefore, Morrison believes that Stalinism is a product of Bolshevism. Hansen makes just one tiny mistake in this syllogism. He assumes that a critic of his article criticizes thereby Bolshevism; whereas, in reality, Morrison, in criticizing Hansen's article, defends Bolshevism. I do not want to create the impression that Hansen specifically states that I believe that Stalinism is a product of Bolshevism. He simply hints at it.

I understand that Macdonald has come out against critical support of the Socialist Party in this election. If I were to say that because Hansen or Wright are also against critical support and therefore they are in the same political camp with Macdonald, I would follow the method of argument used by Hansen.

What have I to do with Farrell's ideas? Only this; that I hope young comrades who want to write will take to heart Farrell's letter. I do not go in for name-calling, insisting on reasoned argument only. I have no serious objection to name-calling provided the reasoned argument dominates. A criticism of Shachtman's views was necessary, but I defy anyone to show me how a party member, after reading Frankel's criticism, could meet Shachtman's contentions. -And this should be our test; does our criticism of an opponent enable our members confidently to meet our opponents in argument? I think Frankel made some good points, but not enough to enable our members to stand up in any argument, and, what is more, the good points were partly concealed by the name-calling. To this extent I agree with Farrell. Make the most of it, Comrade Hansen!

But please refrain from amalgams. You will not, of course, take my advice. But you should know what Trotsky thought of amalgams.

On "Stalinist Degeneration"

Hansen is under the misapprehension, or tries to make people think he is, that I am concerned with Stalinist germs mainly because I am afraid of a possible Stalinist degeneration after the revolution. If I remember correctly, I touched on the problem of Stalinist degeneration in my comments on the educational proposal. I do not have copies of my letters and I am unable to check up. I am fairly certain, however, that I dealt with this problem only because Comrade Martin, in motivating the proposal, stated that the Marxist program and education will guarantee against degeneration. I reminded members that the Stalinist degeneration was not due to a lack of Marxist program and education, but to powerful social and economic forces.

Hansen, by the way, calls my comments an "attack on the educational plan". That is of course not true. They were intended to bring to the attention of the members the idea that, in addition to studying the Marxist program and principles, they must understand that Bolshevism possesses a certain spirit -- which is not the spirit revealed in Hansen's article on "How the Trotskyists Went to Jail" and not the spirit of those who would prohibit our members from discussing with opponents, and (I can add now) not the spirit of those who refuse to publish a critical letter from a friend of the party.

Let us, however, return to the question of Stalinist degeneration. As Hansen correctly points out, the term "Stalinist degeneration" is best used to designate a degeneration subsequent to the revolution. If not qualified it should be used to mean that and nothing else. But even prior to the revolution the term Stalinism may well be used to characterize any organizational idea or practice which is peculiar to Stalinism. It best expresses what we hate. Prior to the revolution a revolutionary party can degenerate to a point where it could be designated as Stalinist only if it makes it impossible for a minority to present its viewpoint. Up to such a point one could use the term Stalinist to characterize a particular idea or practice but not the party as a whole. Is it impossible for a party to become Stalinist prior to the revolution in an organizational sense? It would be foolish to deny that possibility. But possible or not, we must do everything in our power to prevent such an eventuality.

It is not primarily my fear of the degeneration subsequent to the revolution which makes me warn the party about Stalinist germs. It is my conviction that Stalinist germs in a revolutionary party represent a danger to the revolution (in the sense that a Stalinized party will not be able to lead the revolution) that causes me to ring the alarm-bell every time I see evidence of a Stalinist germ.

Hansen accuses me and others of seeking a sure-fire prophylaxis against Stalinism "not in the program of the party or the teachings of the Marxist masters...but in some mystic and intangible subjective attitude which they label 'revolutionary spirit.'" This is, of course, another one of Hansen's distortions. If Hansen refers to a post-revolutionary degeneration, then we ask; didn't

Lenin leave a correct program; wasn't there Marxist education immediately after Lenin's death? Yet degeneration set in. Why? Hansen answers correctly in one place by stating social and economic forces intervened. But that means that the program and education were by themselves insufficient to prevent degeneration. Some members who knew the program and had a Marxist education succumbed and others did not succumb. All I contend, Comrade Hansen, is that those with the greatest independence and integrity fought against the forces of degeneration while the others succumbed.

And then comes what Hansen obviously thinks is the annihilating blow which will do away with me utterly and completely; if Stalinist germs have entered the Trotskyist party, where do they come from? They come, my dear comrade, direct from Stalinism. Did you ever hear that such a disease exists -- not only in the Soviet Union but everywhere? Stalinist ideas are everywhere. Does anyone think that our party can build a Chinese wall around its members and prevent ideas hostile to the working class from penetrating into our ranks? In the capitalist and Stalinist world, capitalist and Stalinist ideas (germs) are everywhere. They infect people's minds and morals and frequently those infected are not aware of it. Some become carriers of these germs (ideas). You, Comrade Hansen, are one of the unconscious carriers -- true, not a dangerous one -- you have only three or four germs in your system -- thus far.

What can I do, Hansen asks, to guarantee that Morrison will not follow Stalinist tactics? No guarantee other than to urge all the members to be alert, critical and independent, to be true to the Bolshevik program and spirit, to oppose me if I venture to introduce Stalinist ideas (germs). A party composed of members educated in the Marxist program and teachings and having the critical, independent spirit (yes, Comrade Hansen, spirit) of revolutionary Marxism will prevent me from following Stalinist tactics.

Hansen "Doepens" the Question

It can be said to Hansen's credit that he tries to be a Marxist. To appear as a Marxist one must have a theory to explain every phenomenon. An opposition has appeared on the scene. It is not enough for Hansen to say that the opposition arises to oppose certain practices. That is too simple for Hansen who tries hard to be a Marxist. He must have a deep theory to explain the opposition: Workers are beginning to come to our party, and Morrison and others, the inference is, are afraid of them, hence turn their attention "inward" in search of the Stalinist virus. Hansen frequently succeeds in sucking fantastic theories from his thumb and this time he has put one of them on paper.

Unfortunately for Hansen, however, there are some facts which invalidate his "theory" and no facts which substantiate it. Within the last few months Morrison has made several proposals. One does not have to agree with these proposals. In fact some who agree with Morrison on his organizational criticisms do not agree with some of the proposals. The important and relevant point, as far as Hansen's "theory" is concerned, is the kind of party activity advocated in Morrison's proposals.

One proposal was (and still is) to publish and distribute a large number of leaflets with the political statement of beliefs contained in some of the pardon petitions. That is a task for the party. The opponents of the proposal contend that such a distribution is unnecessary; that the work of the C.R.D.C. is sufficient. Morrison insists that the party as such should participate in its own way in the pardon campaign, for the purpose of advancing among the workers a knowledge of what the party stands for. Is this a proposal to turn "inward", Comrade Hansen?

Morrison also made the proposal that we give critical support to the S.P. in the election campaign. He contended that, under present circumstances, this would aid thinking workers to tear themselves away from Roosevelt and move in the direction of socialism. Is this a proposal to turn "inward", Comrade Hansen?

A third proposal; In his first message to the P.C. on convention plans, Morrison stressed the fact that the most important task of the convention should be; to mobilize the party for work among the masses around the idea of solving the problem of unemployment, which now, as the war approaches the end, comes ever closer and is the masses' main concern.

Just before Morrison received a summary of Hansen's article, Morrison sent a message to the party stating that the discussion of disputed questions should not prevent the convention from concentrating on the main task of struggle against unemployment.

Are these proposals, Comrade Hansen, turning the attention of the party "inward" in search of Stalinist germs? I repeat; one does not have to agree with the proposals; one need only judge the nature of these proposals honestly to see that they completely refute Hansen's fantastic "theory".

Hansen thinks that there is a contradiction between attempting to guard the party from Stalinist organizational ideas and turning the party toward the workers. In reality, to turn the party to the masses in an effective, revolutionary manner, it is essential to prevent the infiltration of Stalinist germs.

A Critical and Independent Spirit

Hansen does not like my insistence on a critical, scientific, independent spirit. One might as well say that Hansen does not like revolutionary Marxism because, if anything is critical, scientific and independent, it is revolutionary Marxism or Bolshevism. I have no doubt that Hansen and people like him will begin, or have already begun, a sneering campaign about independent thinking; Didn't the Shachtmanites advocate independent thinking? Hansen states that Stalin did some independent thinking when he came out for socialism in one country, and that the revisionists favored independent thinking; hence, is the implication, anyone who thinks independently and favors independent thinking must fall into the category of revisionists. Hansen conveniently forgets that Lenin and Trotsky also did some independent thinking. And undoubtedly

some Hansen, living in their days, told Lenin and Trotsky that they were revising Marx by their independent thinking.

What is independent and critical thinking, Comrade Hansen? It simply means that everyone is obligated to think things out for himself and not blindly accept the ideas of others. Trotsky did not attack the Minorityites for independent thinking but for wrong, anti-Marxist thinking. There were quite a few philistines in our ranks who sneered at independent thinking. But it is criminal to attribute such an attitude to Trotsky who, during his whole conscious life, thought critically and independently. To raise a voice against critical and independent thinking, in other words to favor blindly following a leader, is tantamount to turning one's back on the founder of our movement.

The Marxist theory is a guide to action. To apply it requires constant thought. As revolutionary Marxists we have undertaken the greatest task in history. Does anyone think that such a task can be fulfilled simply by citing quotations from our dead teachers? It can be accomplished only by a constant examination of changing events, by correctly applying the Marxist theory to these events.

What a shameful caricature! Hansen's sneering statement, that Stalin is an independent thinker, carries the inescapable inference that those who followed Stalin also thought independently and that Trotsky, on the contrary, had a blind following. But Hansen and everybody else knows that the vast majority of Stalin's supporters followed and now follow him blindly in all his twists and turns. On the side of Trotsky were all who subjected Stalin's "Theories" to a critical examination and thought independently and had great integrity.

You seem to dislike the term "iconoclast". By that you reveal, perhaps more than by anything else, that you have learned only the letter of Trotskyism and completely failed to catch its spirit. Yes, Comrade Hansen, its spirit. I shall do no more than cite a paragraph from The Revolution Betrayed (page 94):

"The inner regime of the Bolshevik party was characterized by the method of democratic centralism. The combination of these two concepts, democracy and centralism, is not in the least contradictory. The party took watchful care not only that its boundaries should always be strictly defined, but also that all those who entered these boundaries should enjoy the actual right to define the direction of the party policy. Freedom of criticism and intellectual struggle was an irrevocable content of the party democracy. The present doctrine that Bolshevism does not tolerate factions is a myth of the epoch of decline. In reality the history of Bolshevism is a history of the struggle of factions. And, indeed, how could a genuinely

revolutionary organization, setting itself the task of overthrowing the world and uniting under its banner the most audacious iconoclasts, fighters and insurgents, live and develop without intellectual conflicts, without groupings and temporary factional formations? The farsightedness of the Bolshevik leadership often made it possible to soften conflicts and shorten the duration of factional struggle, but no more than that. The Central Committee relied upon this seething democratic support. From this it derived the audacity to make decisions and give orders. The obvious correctness of the leadership at all critical stages gave it that high authority which is the priceless moral capital of centralism."

You resent the term "iconoclast." What do you say to "audacious iconoclasts"? I sincerely hope, Comrade Hansen, that you begin to re-read Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and find the emancipating spirit of these greatest of all iconoclasts.

Two Concepts of a Party

As I said at the very beginning, the really important aspect of Hansen's article is his implied concept of the ideal party. Clearly enough to be recognizable without great difficulty, his article reveals the kind of party that he and those who guide and direct him would like to create. It can now be said that Hansen's article and Morrison's articles reveal two concepts of the nature of a Bolshevik party.

First let me clear up a few points that Hansen deals with and clarification of which will throw light on the main question.

Hansen and his guides are obviously delighted by my statement that members should hesitate "a thousand times" before accepting a procedure that resembles Stalinist procedure. Hansen's criticism of this phrase reminds me of the story of the man who was reading Shakespeare and came across the phrase; "There are sermons in stones and books in the running brooks." He immediately wrote the publishers calling attention to the terrible blunder; The phrase should be changed to "There are sermons in books and stones in the running brooks."

What I mean, Comrade Hansen, is that when a member is told that an article like your "How the Trotskyists Went to Jail" is Bolshevism, he should not accept it without examination and investigation. When a member is told that a letter like Morrison's attacking Macdonald is anti-Bolshevism, he should hesitate and think and examine before accepting that estimate. The same applies to a prohibition to discuss with W.P. members. And his hesitation should be motivated not only by the fact that an intelligent member would naturally hesitate to accept such nonsense, but also because

it resembles procedure peculiar to Stalinism. If this isn't simple enough, and Hansen and others insist that the advice to hesitate means to sit down for several years and do nothing but hesitate, I give up.

Hansen fears that a party where the members discuss will not attract workers. This is nothing but an attitude of petty-bourgeois haughtiness. When advanced workers are ready to join our party it means they are eager and anxious to discuss -- not endlessly to discuss into the late hours but to participate in intelligently-conducted discussions. Hansen actually tells us he wrote his F.I. article "to give a personal and human touch to these leaders in order to appeal to workers who might remain cold to all the other approaches." No, Comrade Hansen. The type of worker who remains cold to all the other approaches will not join the party; and were he to, he would have to be subjected to a very rigorous education in Bolshevism. An article on the 18 going to jail would ordinarily be reprinted in all our fraternal organs. But the English party did not publish Hansen's article; the English leading comrades, if my information is correct, understood that such an article could bring only shame on their party and would not attract anybody. To attract workers one must depend on the program simply and clearly explained and on our activities in the working class.

Hansen is very anxious to counterpose Trotsky's conception of the party to Morrison's conception. He proceeds to do so as follows: Morrison appeals to his 25 years in the movement for the purpose, so Hansen implies, of showing that the best method to build the party is to beware of Stalinist procedure. Now of course this is a complete distortion; what Morrison said was that in the 25 years since he entered the movement he has never seen or heard of a meeting to censure members for discussing with opponents. After this distortion Hansen proceeds to quote Trotsky on the necessity of accepting the revolutionary traditions of Bolshevism. But, Comrade Hansen, it is because Morrison accepts the revolutionary traditions of Bolshevism that he despises your F.I. article; it is because he accepts the revolutionary traditions of Bolshevism that he wrote a letter defending Bolshevism against Macdonald and against you; it is because he accepts the revolutionary traditions of Bolshevism that he immediately reacted to the attempt to scare members not to discuss with opponents. By such distortions you are on the verge, Comrade Hansen, of becoming an epigone of Trotsky. Please, be careful!

One who reads Hansen's article very carefully, and observes both what he says and fails to say, can clearly see the picture of the party that Hansen wants our party to develop into. "The branches today are efficient, streamlined, smooth-working...well-coordinated through a center that is alive to branch needs...workers are impressed by the business-like way we function..." These things in themselves, as part of the party life, are perfectly good. But when one adds to them Hansen's attack on critical and independent thinking, and his complete failure to say anything about discussion and argument as an important aspect of party life, you have a picture of what is to Hansen and others the ideal party.

For Hansen and the majority of the P.C., the party should be some kind of automatic machine that grows and develops by adding parts (members) and by feeding it gas and oil (educational catechisms in the form of questions and answers). The branches in meeting function ideologically, in Hansen's ideal, about as follows: The members listen to the branch organizer and some rise to state their agreement with him; the members raise their hands in approval of his proposals and the proposals of all higher functionaries; they dutifully believe anything the center or the branch organizer tells them. If my picture is somewhat exaggerated, it is not sufficiently so to distort Hansen's picture of the ideal branch.

Hansen and those who guide and direct him want discipline, efficiency, study of the program and of Marxist teachings. So do I and others whom Hansen attacks. But we want more. We want the members to think freely for themselves; to subject all political and organizational ideas to analysis; to listen carefully to all the arguments in case of a dispute; to let themselves be swayed by nothing but their judgment of the arguments; to follow no one blindly. We want the members to respect the leaders, but only when the leaders earn respect by ability, sincerity, hard work, knowledge. And to respect leaders should not mean to accept their views without subjecting them to critical analysis. We want members who will try to acquire confidence in themselves so that they know how to defend the political line and how to apply it to changing conditions and not, on every occasion, run to the center to be told what to say and do. We want the members not to fear or to object to an intelligent argument, nor to think they have answered it by labelling the opponent or accusing him of sniping at the leadership. In a word we want a party in the Bolshevik tradition, while Hansen envisions one which is not at all in the Bolshevik tradition. We want the kind of a party that Trotsky fought to achieve after Lenin died.

October 23, 1944

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A LETTER FROM M. A.

European Capitalism never recovered from the First World War and the Russian Revolution. The decline inaugurated in 1914-1918 was never arrested permanently in the two decades that separated that period from the outbreak of the present war. This decline, immensely accelerated as a result of World War II, with its unprecedented cost in human and material resources, has reached a new low point for European Capitalism.

Since the First World War, Leon Trotsky has pointed out in innumerable articles that European capitalism could survive only as an appendage to American capitalism and that the American bourgeoisie themselves could survive only by converting Europe into a semi-colony. How obvious it has become that this is the case today!

What of the formerly imposing parties of the Second and Third Internationals, where are they now? They have declined along with the whole capitalist system at the same relative speed and in the same proportion. They have given no answer fitting to the circumstances and conditions. They have installed themselves, as has become the usual thing for them, as defenders of "democratic capitalism," "free enterprise" and other such masks for imperialism. Only the Trotskyist Parties have been and are the uncompromising foes of imperialism. Only we have survived the terrible decline of capitalism and only we carry the unsullied banner of Labor Emancipation.

This is no accident. Our movement, more firmly rooted than ever among the laboring classes, is based not on crumbs tossed from the imperialist table, not on promises of "liberal" capitalist politicians but on the granite foundations of Marxism. The record shows that far from succumbing to the capitalist persecution we have forged steadily forward. We have reason to be proud of our achievements and to expect great gains in the future.

Europe is in the first stages of Revolution now. This is incontestable. The masses, wherever they have been able to express themselves, have shown a hostility to the capitalist order that brought the present conditions and have demanded socialism. They are demanding in a clearer and clearer voice a fundamental SOCIAL change. Capitalism has almost no supporters among the war-weary, hungry and oppressed masses of Europe. That is the lesson of Italy, Rumania and France. It is clear for all to see and understand. Only with the help of American And British bayonets can the European capitalists save for a time the cracking foundations of the old order.

In this situation the importance of the program which goes to the very heart of the problem, the problem of social change, the importance of our program, stands revealed. Half-measures and hesitation in the face of great events will not do. We stand for the Socialist United States of Europe, for Soviets, for nationalization of industry and workers' control as the solution. We explain the role of American Imperialism which is bringing to Europe not liberation but continued

oppression and starvation under capitalism. The masses of Europe and America will understand this.

In these circumstances the Trotskyist Parties of Europe will look to us, the oldest and most experienced Party, for help both material and programmatic. The greatest aid we can give them is our program, our best weapon. We must and will not fail them!

Those of us who are suffering an enforced absence from our customary posts have placed with those who remain a precious trust: Our Party and its program. We have the right to take part, as much as conditions permit, in the present discussion, to state our judgment on what has been done and will be done. When our oldest and most experienced leaders were imprisoned we retained full confidence because we knew that those who were chosen to step into their places were tried and capable. As Comrade Cannon pointed out in his Farewell Address in December, 1943, we were not caught by surprise, our plans had been made. Those who took over, he said, were not chosen hurriedly, they had distinguished themselves as a result of years of devoted work and gained the confidence of the membership.

It is my firm opinion that they have fulfilled among other duties their first to the Party; Carried out its program, defended it against its enemies. They have given to the Party capable leadership. We can, therefore, put our stamp of approval on their work.

Superficial people may call this hero-worship. They will be sadly mistaken. Our concern is not with finding heroes but with maintaining our Party and its program. It is no easy thing to be taken away from our places in the Party and placed in enforced absence from the work we want to do. What makes this condition bearable for us is the fact that we know that while we have been away the Party has carried on in its great tradition, has grown as a result and will continue to grow and expand its influence. Hence, we are satisfied to do what we can wherever we are. We express our confidence in our future and await the day when we can return to take our places once again where we properly belong.

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THE FRANKEL ARTICLE AND OUR POLEMICAL METHOD

By James Campbell

The tradition of the Marxist movement has always been to answer every attack upon its theory in the most principled and thorough-going manner. Theory is the road-map in our struggle for the socialist revolution; we must be able to defend it against every attack and establish unquestionably the superiority of our method and program to those of our opponents.

The party cannot attract those who are serious about theory if we fail to defend ours competently. Even more important, we cannot accomplish the most urgent task of educating cadres in the party who will be capable of mature theoretical thinking on their own account if we do not constantly demonstrate our theoretical method in answering attacks upon important parts of our program. The continued correctness of our theory depends, in the last analysis, upon the most painstaking education of every party comrade. In this respect if it can be said that one picture is worth a thousand words, it can be affirmed with equal validity that a theoretical polemic is worth a dozen formal classes.

One often hears it said (and by leading comrades, sad to relate) that "we don't want to waste time arguing with the Shachtmanites." A more contemptuous attitude towards our theoretical obligations can hardly be imagined. The argument (vulgar as it is) runs like this: "The Shachtmanites are a small group, of no importance to the labor movement, so why should we spend time refuting their attacks upon our theory?"

It may be recalled that Trotsky would not let a single attack upon our movement, from no matter what source, go unanswered. He did this not because he necessarily deemed the individual or group from whom the attack stemmed important, but because he held that our theory must appear to everyone, both inside and outside the party, as incontrovertibly superior to every substitute. He made this his practice because he realized the importance of polemics in educating comrades in the method of Marxism.

The same considerations should guide us today. Since the Shachtmanites left us in 1940 they have developed a position substantially different (more completely revisionist) than the one they held during the faction fight and against which Trotsky levelled his attack. The fact that we predicted the general course of their development does not absolve us from answering the arguments that Shachtman puts forward today in support of his theory of "bureaucratic collectivism." It is necessary that we do this in order to maintain our theoretical position and to educate our comrades and contacts on the questions involved.*

*Answering the objection in advance, it is not a question of "comradely discussion". To refute the arguments of a political opponent is not necessarily the same thing as engaging in "comradely discussion" with him. Trotsky's "In Defense of Terrorism" was, as is well known, not a "comradely discussion" with Kautsky, but it answered his arguments nevertheless.

Harry Frankel's review of "The New Course" in the May "Fourth International" utterly fails to accomplish this task. The article simply reiterates the fundamentals of our position on the Soviet Union (significance of the nationalized property, non-class nature of the bureaucracy), recalls in the most sterile fashion that Trotsky condemned Shachtman, takes up a few minor points (morale of the Red Army, etc.) and that is all. The rest of the article is bombast and pompous verbiage which leaves Shachtman's theory, defenseless as it is, entirely unscathed.

Anticipating the objections, let us state here that we are not attacking the article because it is too harsh on Shachtman, because it makes him look "ludicrous and hateful". Just the opposite! The article, because it fails to destroy (or even take up) Shachtman's main theoretical points, fails also to make him appear "ludicrous" in the eyes of anyone who is acquainted with his position. Such a person can only wonder why we refuse to answer Shachtman on the theoretical questions raised. It is because in his answer to "The Struggle for the New Course" Frankel has done our reputation more harm than Shachtman's that we are objecting. It is also because the attitude towards theoretical discussion embodied in his article is typical of a disturbing tendency that has recently emerged in our party that we feel it important to make this criticism.

In his review of the "New Course" and in his answer to Farrell, Frankel asks challengingly why Shachtman fails to refute Trotsky's arguments on the nature of the Soviet Union as expressed, for instance, in "The Revolution Betrayed" or "In Defense of Marxism". It is a point poorly taken, to put it mildly. One does not have to be an attorney for Shachtman to recognize that he has attempted at various times (with outstanding lack of success, to be sure) to refute many of Trotsky's arguments, including those in these two books. From Frankel's review one would never guess that in "The Struggle for the New Course" itself Shachtman devotes many pages to an attempted refutation of Trotsky's position. But Frankel does not by so much as a word answer these very points raised by Shachtman. Unfortunately, he is guilty of the very accusation that he so blindly hurls at Shachtman. That the latter is himself guilty of distortions and falsifications does not justify the type of an article that Frankel has written. It is not our method of polemic.

In his review Frankel should have taken up Trotsky's original incorrect prediction as to the fate of the Centrist bureaucracy* and the distorted use to which this mistake is put by Shachtman in an attempt to invalidate the whole of the Old Man's theory. He should have explained in some detail why the Soviet bureaucracy is not a class (and not by stopping after calling our attention to the nationalized property) and exposed Shachtman's sophistry on the "historical necessity" of the Soviet bureaucracy. In other words, he should have made a rounded attack upon the roots of Shachtman's theory and thus established the correctness of our position for all to see.

*Trotsky originally predicted that the Stalinist bureaucracy, a Centrist growth, would soon be crushed by either the Right Wing (Bukharin) or the Left (Trotskyist).

Did Frankel just miss the target? Was it simply a matter of Frankel being personally incapable of answering Shachtman's arguments? If this were so it would be cause for criticism -- but nothing beyond a criticism of the author for writing on a subject he was not capable of dealing with and of the editors for printing such an article. With that the subject would be closed and we would presume that a similar instance would not occur again. But we do not believe that it is a question of an isolated mistake.

It is not a question of an isolated mistake because it can be clearly demonstrated that those responsible for the writing and publishing of the article pursue a conscious policy of refusing to discuss the theoretical questions raised by Shachtman. We have already referred to the current prominence of the statement that "we don't want to waste time arguing with the Shachtmanites". One of those who have made this statement is the acting editor of the F.I., Comrade Wright. Another is Comrade M. Stein, who as late as the New York membership meeting on October 25 replied to those who criticized the Frankel article by declaring that he endorsed it 100% and that, in his opinion, our task was not to debate "old questions" with Shachtman but to "tell him off".** And finally, Comrade Frankel himself, in a personal discussion before the article was written, declared that he didn't want to devote "too much" of the review to "arguing with Shachtman".

The utter incorrectness of this attitude has been previously indicated. If the attitude is allowed to continue unchecked it can have serious consequences upon the theoretical status and level of our party.

We have in the arsenal of Trotskyism all the theoretical weapons necessary to defeat any attack upon us. It is only necessary to apply these weapons continuously in order to defend our program from attack and, no less important, increase our proficiency at their use. In this tradition has the theory of Marxism been built.

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**Of course, it is impossible to "tell off" Shachtman to the satisfaction of the reader without demolishing his theoretical structure. Since Frankel fails in the latter, he of necessity fails in the former. It seems, however, that what Comrade Stein means by "telling him off" is . . . calling him names. We have no objection to this if it is accompanied by supporting arguments -- by itself it hardly merits three pages in our theoretical organ.

STATEMENT READ TO N. Y. MEMBERSHIP MEETING ON CENSURE

(July 13, 1944)

Dear Comrades,

I deeply regret that it is impossible for me to be present in person at this meeting. After talking to the Control Commission, and reading their subsequent report, I wish to make the following statement:

1. There are several factual errors and errors of implication that Comrade Russell will correct. I am in full agreement with these corrections.

2. The significant distinction I wish to emphasize is the difference between a discussion and a political debate. Only a political debate comes within the jurisdiction of the party. Had we desired to argue programmatic differences between our party and the Workers Party, it would have been a political debate. We should not only have asked the permission, but the aid of the party, in such a political act. However, in this type of private discussion, which was concerned primarily with the general Marxist problem of historical materialism; what is a new class, does a new class have to be progressive. . . etc.-- and only incidentally with the programmatic issues involved in our analysis of the Russian state, I maintain it was unnecessary to request the permission and assistance of the party.

3. A discussion on any of the basic problems of Marxism may be held with any number of persons irrespective of political affiliations, and without any desire to make political capital out of it. Such a discussion is not a political act. In the event that programmatic questions occur incidental to the main topics of discussion, I, as a loyal party member, feel obligated to defend the party program whether or not I am in agreement with it. At this point, I wish to deny categorically that I have differences with the party on the Russian question. I have no such differences.*

4. It must be fully recognized that the Shachtmanites are engaged in a political attack on our party. I, therefore, consider it to have been a mistake in judgment not to have been cognizant of the fact that their purpose would be to make political capital out of our attempted discussion.

While no error was committed in desiring such a discussion, practically, it was proven unfeasible. In recognition of this fact, we broke off with them, and had no subsequent meetings.

Granted, we made a tactical error, but no basic, principle political error -- and, certainly no violation of party discipline was involved.

I wish the membership to consider what the proper procedure should have been in this case? Was it necessary to invoke the Control Commission? Why these drastic measures? Are they proportionate to the incident?

Or are these the rationalized tactics of our leadership who have been needled by some of Shachtman's recent articles? The reply to the political attacks by the Shachtmanites is to rebutt them, not to censure loyal party comrades for attempted discussions with them. The best rebuttal to Shachtman's attacks is the political education of the party membership not the terrorization of it.

I repudiate the censure. It is a reprehensible act. I am said in the statement to be critical of the leadership. I hereby affirm that it is not my right but my duty to be critical of the leadership. Criticism, to be differentiated from gossip mongering, is good for the party. No Bolshevik party can be considered healthy unless its members are critical.

What is required right now is the examination of Shachtman's political attacks; the refutation of them publicly, and the education of the membership on the political issues involved. This will strengthen our party; any other course weakens it.

Sylvia Rainer

East Side Branch, N. Y.

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*By that I mean I agree with Trotsky's criteria for determining the nature of the USSR at different stages of its development, rather than a mere mechanical repetition of the slogan "Unconditional defense of the USSR", which flows from a static concept of the USSR. . . See In Defense of Marxism, p. 14.

TWO TENDENCIES IN CHICAGO

By Ken Hayes, Chicago Branch Organizer

Two tendencies have become defined in the Chicago Branch. They are based upon divergent conceptions of Bolshevik organizational methods. These tendencies have existed in latent form for some time; but the organizational issues raised in the party during the past period have served to crystallize them.

The opposition to the National Committee, supporting in part the claims of Comrade Morrison, contends that certain acts of the national leadership (the Control Commission Report on the four N. Y. comrades, the postponement of general party discussion on the issues in dispute at the 1943 Plenum, etc.) are "germs of Stalinism," indications of a bureaucratic tendency, or, at least, bureaucratic acts. "Hero-worship" or "seeds of a leader cult" are discerned in Comrade Hansen's article, "How the Trotskyists Went to Jail."

The tendency supporting the position of the National Committee has rejected such imputations and has insisted that the task before the party is the building by the method of democratic centralism of a firm, disciplined, combat organization capable of fulfilling its revolutionary role, rather than engaging in a futile internal hunt against "Stalinist germs" in the leadership.

For months prior to the opening of the pre-convention discussion the Chicago branch has been in a state of division taking on more and more the characteristics of a bitter factional struggle. This struggle is the result of a light-minded, irresponsible and unrestrained agitation against the national leadership and its decisions.

The leader and initiator of this agitation locally is Comrade Bennett, an N.C. member, who because of her national position and long-standing in the branch has been able to give a certain personal weight to her accusations, particularly in the absence of any other N.C. member to refute her "inside dope." Her complaints, naturally, have followed in large part those made familiar to the party by the letters of Comrade Morrison, with the addition of virulence peculiarly her own.

Chicago Branch -- A Case History

It will be illuminating for the party to study the case history of the Chicago opposition tendency, particularly since the imprisonment of the 18 and during the present discussion, to learn just what organizational methods these inveterate hunters of "Stalinist germs" pursue when they are in a position of leadership, what an example of leadership they present, and how "democracy" fares in their hands.

Early this year we began to hear a series of charges about a "leader cult," the "suppression" of a contribution to the internal bulletin on dialectics (the discussion had been temporarily suspended by common agreement), and the omission, for "factional" reasons, of

Comrade Morrow's first edition preface from the second edition of "Socialism On Trial." The opposition, with Comrade Bennett lending them the authority of her N.C. position, invariably placed the worst possible interpretation upon all these cases. Indeed, the purveyors of this unsubstantiated gossip did not hesitate to spread it even before attempting to ascertain the facts or at least inquiring about the actual intent of the P.C.

This pre-determined hostility and suspicion toward the national leadership was strikingly evidenced on the occasion of the P.C. appeal for the \$1,000 British Solidarity Fund. Everywhere in the party, outside of Chicago, this appeal was received enthusiastically as an opportunity to give a special public demonstration of our international solidarity with our victimized British comrades. The response of the Chicago branch Executive Committee, in which the opposition exercised the leadership, was to pass a motion requesting an accounting from the P.C. of the \$15,000-15th Anniversary Fund!

The comrades supporting the motion claimed they could not understand why the defense fund for our British comrades was not taken from the \$15,000 party fund. The inference was that the \$15,000 fund was exhausted -- no effort was made to first find out if this were so -- and, if so, that there was something "peculiar" about the whole matter. No direct charge of this character was made; but how else could a motion for an accounting outside of the regular constitutional procedure be interpreted than as an expression of suspicion of irregular or inefficient handling of the party's funds?

Comrade M. Stein, Acting National Secretary, wrote a letter to the branch explaining the political purpose of the special British fund as well as pointing out that the motion by a branch for an accounting of national funds was not in accord with party procedure and precedent, and that, in fact, this was the first instance of such a request from a branch in our party. He further informed us that a full accounting would be made at the convention in accordance with constitutional provisions.

On the basis of this explanation, a motion was introduced into the branch Executive Committee to withdraw the previous motion for an accounting. This motion was defeated in the Executive Committee; but passed by a majority of one vote in the branch.

The opposition found in Comrade Stein's letter additional "proof" for their charges of "bureaucracy." See -- Comrade Stein and the P.C. were trying to deny the right of a branch to ask for a financial accounting -- as though the original intent of the motion were merely to assert this abstract right, and not to cast suspicion and discredit on the leadership of our party. Dire warnings were issued about the "danger of bureaucratic degeneration in the party," "the Bolshevik Party too was once democratic" (overtone of the theory that Stalinism flows from Bolshevism and no mention of Bolshevik centralism), we must "exercise a 24 hour a day vigilance over our leadership." At the same time, those comrades who refused to be stampeded or brow-beaten into supporting these irresponsible and slanderous attacks on the party leadership were subjected to sneering ridicule for "servility" and "hand-raising."

It takes no profound understanding to realize what effect these wild and unrestrained accusations and suspicions had upon new and inexperienced workers in the branch. If long-time members, even an N.C. representative, could hold the overwhelming bulk of the national leadership in such low esteem, what sort of "confidence" could this generate in a new member? Would he not think that he was facing the "same old crap" that he witnessed in conservative trade union organizations, where the leaders are alien to the ranks and are trying always to "put something over" on the membership? What kind of combat party can be built without this elementary pre-condition of confidence in the tested and democratically-elected party leadership?

Attitude Toward the New York Censure

The opposition, however, refused to learn anything from its irresponsible conduct on the matter of the British Solidarity Fund. It was out to demonstrate the "bureaucratic degeneration" creeping on the leadership and any incident which could be twisted to fit this preconception was grist for the mill. It sufficed for the mere appearance of Comrade Morrison's first letter, procured through the "grapevine," about the Control Commission's report on the four N. Y. comrades with whom the Shachtmanites organized a discussion, to convince these comrades that they "had the goods" on the National Committee.

Without attempting to ascertain the real facts in the case, or of first inquiring of the P.C. as to its version of the case, the opposition within the Executive Committee seized on the Morrison letter. In the Executive Committee, the censure of the four was characterized as a "Stalinist-type" act; the N. Y. membership hearing and discussion of the Control Commission's report was described as nothing less than -- a "Moscow Trial." The real issue -- the question of the violation of elementary party discipline and loyalty when our comrades participated in an organized discussion with members of an enemy group without the knowledge or permission of the party -- was misrepresented. The Control Commission and P.C. were falsely accused of forbidding party members under any and all circumstances, whether informal, or accidental, or in a trade union, etc., to even speak to Shachtmanites. An invidious comparison was made with the Stalinist attitude toward us.

When driven into a corner on the real issue of the violation of elementary party discipline and loyalty, the opposition pitched their tune to a new key -- that "the punishment had been too harsh" that the censured comrades (with the exception of Comrade A. Stein) were misguided "innocents" who only wanted to secure a little bit of enlightenment on their doubts -- what better place to seek such enlightenment than an enemy organization and not one's own party!

When the opposition members in the Executive Committee proposed to read the Morrison letters before the branch -- to be sure only for "educational purposes" -- the more responsible members of the Executive Committee strongly objected. We pointed out that the Control Commission report, the object of Comrade Morrison's attack, was not even the property of the party at large; that a proper discussion could be initiated only when all the material had

been made available through an internal bulletin containing the Control Commission report, the Morrison letters and the P.C. replies. But the opposition didn't care to know the facts, the position of the P.C., the contents of the Control Commission report -- the mere accusation of Comrade Morrison, also based on an utter lack of knowledge of the facts, was sufficient for these comrades to "educate" the branch.

This antipathy to waiting for an organized, directed discussion revealed the opposition's departure from a correct understanding of Bolshevik centralism, just as their haste to "spread the dirt" without affording the branch an opportunity to get all the facts reflected their warped conception of democratic procedure. It might be added, that the discussion over the censure disclosed that some of the heat about the Control Commission and P.C. was generated by an attitude of conciliationism toward the petty-bourgeois Workers Party.

Agitation Around the Morrow Document

The appearance of the filched Morrow document, intended by its author as a confidential statement for the N.C., which was circulated by the Shachtmanites to our branchmembers, provided a new point of agitation against the N.C. The arguments of the opposition about this "suppression" scarcely differed from those of Shachtman, this outraged "democrat" whom Trotsky characterized as a "petty-bourgeois swindler" who had "picked the pockets of the proletarian party" of its theoretical organ. Comrade Bennett struck off a thesis in white-hot heat even before the P.C. could get a statement of facts before the membership. While it was too bad Shachtman was up to his old tricks of petty-larceny and trying to scandalize our party, after all, that's what is to be expected when the leadership "suppresses discussion."

All the sound reasons of the leadership for postponing a discussion one week before the comrades were going to prison -- the need for the substitute leadership to adjust itself to the unfamiliar tasks of directing the party without being immediately plunged into what might lead to a sharp internal dispute that could not be resolved short of a convention; the necessity of the party to concentrate upon public activity for the purpose of counteracting the blow against the party; the agreement of Comrade Morrison on postponement of such discussion as well as the agreement of Comrade Morrow not to press for it -- all this was light-mindedly brushed aside by the opposition. These were all "pretexts" -- the leadership was really "opposed" to and "afraid" of discussion.

While our tendency attempted to persuade the opposition to postpone discussion of convention issues until the pre-convention period, members of the opposition tendency could not wait for a rounded and conclusive discussion to be held. Any and all occasions were utilized for pressing their attack on the leadership -- and on correct Bolshevik organizational methods. Thus, one of the opposition took advantage of an educational on Trotsky's "The New Course," which Shachtman had published as a cover and vehicle for his attack on Trotsky's program in the name of "Trotskyism," to launch an attack on the N.C. for a "tendency toward bureaucratic degeneration," citing as "proof" the charges previously enumerated.

The Pre-Convention Discussion

That was the state of affairs up to the point when the party opened a formal, organized discussion in preparation for the convention. Then, suddenly, those comrades who were the loudest and most persistent complainants about the "suppression of discussion", who had been engaged for months in their undisciplined "discussion" without benefit of party direction, began to manifest a certain disinterest if not downright resistance to the organization of a full and adequate discussion provided by the pre-convention discussion period. They had been having their say for months. Now, we, who had refrained from pressing our position at last had the opportunity, in an organized fashion, to have our say.

But the opposition -- always balancing off in their erroneous, inflexible manner equal portions of democracy with equal portions of centralism -- decided that now was not the time to place "undue emphasis" on discussion. The discussion which they were anxious to precipitate after the leading comrades went to prison and when the party was confronted with tasks of action which could not be postponed or impeded -- that discussion, it was now stressed, must not infringe on the previous routine activities of the branch. Therefore, the opposition introduced a proposal which would have limited the opportunity for discussion by continuing the semi-monthly open branch meetings and holding pre-convention discussion meetings at other times. In this fashion, the opposition shifted from an over-emphasis on democracy in the very period when centralism was the dominant need of the party, to a reluctance for full and free discussion precisely during the time designated by the party for such discussion. Because of the weight of party activity, the discussion might have suffered seriously had we not resorted to special meetings, which proved to be necessary in any case.

But we were confronted then with another move to limit discussion. The differences which we hitherto had been led to believe were of such a marked character that discussion on them could not be postponed -- indeed that such postponement was but evidence of "bureaucratic degeneration" -- we now learned were not considered of any considerable moment. Now we found ourselves labeled an "unprincipled clique" deliberately creating differences where "no differences exist."

Comrade Bennett's Handling of the Resolution

Comrade Bennett, who had previously raged against the "suppression" of the Morrow document, could find no reason for taking up the branch's time even discussing it. Differences between the position of the P.C. and Comrade Morrow on the international resolution? Nonsense, and anyone trying to say otherwise was just a "factionalist" picking "differences" out of the air. Comrade Bennett, in fact, now came forth as the champion of the P.C.'s draft resolution on the European situation. Forgotten were her previous declarations of support for Comrade Morrow's position. She even was designated as the reporter on the P.C. resolution, on the grounds of her N.C. position.

But her report before the branch revealed that she was attempting to reconcile the line of the P.C. draft and Plenum resolutions with the line of the Morrow document -- and this in spite of the obvious divergence, which Comrade Morrow himself has been the first to admit, between his position and that of the P.C. on such not inconsiderable matters as the role of bourgeois democracy, the character and role of Anglo-American imperialism, and, indeed, the immediate perspectives of the European Revolution.

In order to forestall an attack by us on Comrade Morrow's position, Comrade Bennett falsely insisted that the P.C. draft resolution incorporated Morrow's main ideas. Thus, she not only misrepresented the line of the P.C. but defended the erroneous position of Comrade Morrow under the guise of defending the line of the P.C. Of course, her report would have been incomplete had it not been rounded off with a resounding attack on the N.C. for its alleged failure to properly organize the discussion at the last Plenum. This was Comrade Bennett's contribution to a "clarification" of the vital political issues before the party, the "clarification" which she insisted was denied the party membership when the P.C. "suppressed discussion" of the Morrow document.

When our tendency then attempted to point out the indisputable differences between the Morrow and the P.C. positions -- we were promptly accused of "creating differences" and the opposition sought to whip up a bitter atmosphere against us as "factionalists" and an "unprincipled clique."

Nor did the opposition lack equal flexibility in shifting its grounds on the organizational issues, as the discussion more and more revealed their various contentions and interpretations of P.C. actions and decisions to be untenable. From nothing less than a full-blown tendency toward "bureaucratic degeneration" the guilt of the N.C. has become successively extenuated to "bureaucratic tendencies," "bureaucratic acts," "restrictive acts," or mere "mistakes of a bureaucratic character." That is not to deny that the same "Stalinist germs" lurk behind each of these several concepts. For some, nothing less than a "leader cult" still exists, while for others, only Comrade Hansen it now appears "worships heroes."

What a distaste for discussion, what an indignant repudiation of "factionalism", what a desperate effort to deny and conceal differences -- at the very moment when these differences and their full discussion had become the order of the day in the party!

If the opposition has shown no lack of harshness and unrestraint in its unjustifiable attacks on the national leadership, it is none the less extremely resentful of and sensitive to criticism of its own policies and methods in the Chicago branch, which the opposition, by and large, has traditionally led.

Atmosphere In The Branch

An unhealthy atmosphere has long prevailed in the branch. While we have worked very hard to attract workers and to increase the proletarian composition in the branch, the very atmosphere created by

the present members of the opposition has always made it extremely difficult to assimilate and integrate new worker recruits into the party.

The attitude of members of the opposition is characterized by an element of intellectual snobbery, rudeness toward other comrades both in and outside of meetings, an impatient, sneering, often personally insulting response to the views and suggestions of those lacking the "education" and articulateness of the well-read -- and eager to demonstrate that fact -- branch elite. There is a certain demonstrative "intellectualism," talking-down to workers and aloofness toward new members and contacts. At times, when it is directed against the workers in the branch in the course of a sharp difference of opinion, as in the present discussion, this attitude of the leading opposition members has approached to what might be termed intellectual terrorism. The average worker, lacking the formal education and glib tongue which the more erudite possess, tends to be intimidated into silence by sneers, "learned" polemic, and downright rude and cutting remarks.

At the same time, the branch is ridden with an excess of debate and wrangling over trivialities, interminable branch meetings. The organizational methods of the opposition has produced incessant turmoil, discouraging to workers who seek unity, comradeship and discipline in our party. To this is added a veritable fetishistic pre-occupation with "democracy," especially revealed in the hypercritical attitude toward the national leadership, of which the motion for an accounting of the \$15,000 fund is an example.

New members and contacts have at various times expressed their dissatisfaction with these conditions and a number of recruits have left the party. Members who have transferred to this branch from others have had occasion to remark upon these conditions. And while there has been a certain improvement of late, this has not been of a fundamental nature.

Two members of the branch Executive Committee ventured to call attention in party meetings to this unhealthy condition and point out that members have been lost as a result of it. These statements of fact only evoked sharp criticism and resentment from members of the opposition. Their first reaction was not to give serious consideration to this criticism, but to attempt to discredit the critics. They contended that recruits had dropped out for every reason under the sun but the bad atmosphere in the branch. It is true that there are almost always personal factors involved in the loss of new recruits (although it is difficult most often to ascertain precisely such personal reasons). But where a worker is enthusiastic about the party, his devotion to the party will most frequently outweigh personal considerations; he will make the personal sacrifices and adjustments necessary to continue functioning in the party. But where a worker finds the atmosphere of a branch repellent and alien, he certainly finds no inducement or inspiration to overcome personal difficulties in order to remain in the party. Finally, through our insistence on this issue a full discussion of the question did take place in the Executive Committee and a report was made to the branch.

Roots of the Present Situation

But this did not and cannot solve a condition which has roots going back many years and which are nourished by the entire past tradition of the Chicago organization. Until fairly recently, the Chicago branch has been overwhelmingly non-worker in composition. A number of those who began to work in industry in the past two years were comrades from previous non-working class backgrounds who were colonized into the plants. Proletarian elements transferred from other branches and new worker recruits have found themselves thrust into an environment conditioned by carry-overs from the past. These carry-overs include; (1) a closed circle spirit, born of long isolation and ingrown association, involving in part various family and personal ties; (2) bad habits, attitudes and mannerisms, of which intellectual snobbery is one manifestation; (3) sloppy organizational methods and a predilection for long-winded and polemical discussion; (4) opposition to centralized leadership and to the method of centralism as an integral aspect of democratic centralism, and from this, hostility and suspicion toward the "regime." It must be pointed out in this connection that accounts were never fully settled with the organization question in this branch during the 1940 struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition. Some comrades who in 1940 supported the majority on the basic political question and remained loyal to the party, nevertheless continued to inscribe a question-mark over the issue of the "regime."

This condition must now be definitively eliminated or reduced to a point where the branch can make the healthy strides forward which are possible in the favorable objective conditions confronting us in Chicago. The advanced workers are becoming increasingly receptive to our program. Through colonization and recruitment we now have approximately 50% of the comrades in industry. This favorable development, and the new opportunities before us, have posed new problems and tasks. The major problem is the assimilation of new recruits through Marxist education and the creation of a genuinely proletarian atmosphere in which workers will feel completely at ease and at home. We must have classes, organized discussion groups, meetings and social affairs so conducted as to be attractive to worker-contacts. This requires a different and more healthful atmosphere in the branch and the application of correct Bolshevik organizational methods.

That is precisely what the opposition leadership has proved incapable of accomplishing. Their constant agitation against the party leadership, the envenomed atmosphere they engender, the incessant friction they provoke, their opposition to centralist concepts of organization, are an obstacle to building a proletarian combat party.

They have a certain resistance to the new conditions in the branch and the party and to the new tasks dictated by the objective developments. It is this resistance which has found its distorted expression in the current campaign against the national leadership and the frantic search for "Stalinist germs" and "bureaucratic degeneration."

The Fundamental Issue

However cautiously and guardedly these latter conceptions are now expressed, and whatever variants and formulas are now projected by members of the opposition to conceal the underlying issue, the fact remains that the fundamental issue before the branch is the charge that "Stalinist germs" have penetrated the party -- and among the most tested, politically developed and experienced comrades, the N.C. members. Various secondary issues and differences have recently been raised by members of the opposition to obscure the main issue and throw a smokescreen over it. They thereby attempt to divert the branch membership from coming to grips with the real issue. But the comrades must recognize that only two basic tendencies exist, and a choice must be made between them. If the comrades are convinced that there are no "Stalinist germs" nor bureaucratic tendencies in the party, that the national leadership in the main has followed correct Bolshevik method and procedure, then they must support the tendency within the branch which upholds the N.C. and represents the sound party concepts of organization.

Our tendency puts forward a program which flows from our correct organizational concepts. We insist that the energies and attention of the branch must be turned outwards towards the workers who are moving in ever greater numbers in our direction. We must repudiate any attempts to divert our activities in this fruitful direction by a futile hunt after what Trotsky called the "fourth dimension of democracy", concretely represented in this party discussion by the microscopic search after "Stalinist germs."

The organizational methods, including the educational program, must be adapted to the needs of the workers, to attracting and retaining them in the branch. We must be guided in every activity by the dominant aim of maintaining a party that will be attractive to workers, that will command their enthusiastic support and loyalty. We must not subordinate this aim to comply with the likes or dislikes, the attitudes or habits of "intellectuals" or non-workers.

To achieve this aim the leading committees and posts in the branch must be weighted with workers, genuine proletarians. This does not imply that other comrades of talent must not be given positions of responsibility and leadership. But the orientation must be toward development of proletarian leadership; the decisive weight in the leadership must reside with the workers.

It is the firm opinion of the N.C. tendency in the branch that the Chicago organization will be able to realize the many opportunities presented in this important industrial area and build a mass Bolshevik local here only on the foundations of the program and perspective we have outlined. The position of the opposition tendency must be decisively rejected by the branch and a solid majority must be built in support of the N.C. policies and the branch program we have proposed.

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ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY DURING THE PAST YEAR

By Lou Cooper

It is necessary as part of the pre-convention discussion to call attention to an important shortcoming in party work during the late winter and early spring of 1944. This shortcoming was our lack of a clear, consistent attempt to intervene ideologically in the internal struggles going on in the CP at that time flowing firstly from an underestimation of the situation in the CP after Browder's Teheran speech of December 1943.

In December 1943, after the Teheran Conference of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, Browder made a most prominent speech in which he declared baldly and openly that the CP was dedicated to capitalism after the war. (As all comrades know this has by and large been the strict line adhered to by CP leaders since then. For example, Bridges' and Currans' declaration of continuing the no-strike pledge after the war.) A few weeks later the CP itself published Browder's interview with the newspaper PM in which he clearly and unequivocally stated his completely reactionary line for all CPers and sympathizers (as well as others of course) to see.

Immediately after the speech and interview tremendous rumblings started in the CP. Many members were completely aghast. Many had been rationalizing their support of the CP line with the belief that after the war the CP would move in new independent class directions. These members, in their own minds, were temporarily postponing the fight for socialism, etc. True, many of them would probably have been fooled again for a time at least by a pseudo left line after the war, but poor Browder, the executor of Stalin's policies, had to clearly enunciate a further rightist turn. And this turn hit up against the feelings of many members and sympathizers of the CP.

A pre-convention period opened up in the CP, and S. Darcy, a Central Committee oldtimer, became the unofficial leader of a modern Lovestonite tendency which said generally -- Stalin is ok for the Soviet Union -- but Browder is a misleader here. We've got to be for Socialism here and in Europe after the war. So spoke Darcy, the new pseudo leftist faker. He told CPers that he was for a United Nations victory and the no-strike pledge now, but for the class struggle after the war.

Many CPers tended toward Darcy's line, but no Darcyites ever got to the Convention in May. This is undoubtedly partly accounted for by the methods of election of delegates to this convention -- one for every 200 members with no provision for minorities. In addition, of course, the CP leaders who announced 'the broadest free and democratic discussion' disenfranchised oppositionists by the simple expediency of expelling them before the convention. For example, the Daily Worker announced a few days before the convention that three "Trotskyists" had been expelled. More important than this information this DW notice added that there were still disruptive elements in the "party" throughout the State!

In addition, Darcy, a pseudo left careerist did not of course raise the level of struggle.

However, as far as is known, Darcy did hold "secret" meetings with oppositionist elements in various spots in the country.

The disagreement, inside the CP with the new CP turn, was of great proportion. It is open knowledge that hundreds left the party in disgust between January and May 1944. It is reliably reported that in the Bronx alone dozens left the party, there were fist fights and terribly disorderly membership meetings

Many CP pamphlets pushing Stalin's and Browder's further rightist line were immediately published. Foster opened up a column in the Daily Worker answering 'all' questions, critical and otherwise. A reading of this continual column shows that the nature of many of the questions were in the direction of Darcy's position and to the left of his position. In the New Masses, a CP supporter, Edelman, was given a full page to enunciate a mixed up pseudo left position, which begs the CP leaders to re-assure the perplexed members that the CP will be for Socialism after the war. In answer to Edelman, the Editors unwaveringly threw cold water right on Edelman's head by clearly stating -- sorry, we're not for Socialism after the war.

Many CPers started reading the Militant. This fact was attested to immediately by a few party branches in the country that reported in the Militant that CPers at meetings quietly took the Militant during January and February 1944.

From January on, we had a chance to intervene ideologically in the struggle; to help clarify the confused, perplexed and disappointed minds of many CPers. Unfortunately, our "intervention" was superficial and unclear in perspective. There were very few real analytical articles in the Militant well-aimed at the perplexed members. The Soviet Union under Stalin, should particularly have been carefully analyzed at this time so as to educate CPers who were critical of CP policies in the U.S., but still believed that the Soviet Union under the Stalinists was ok.

I proposed at that time a column to be called "Back to Lenin" with a subtitle "This column is directed to members and sympathizers of the CP -- Questions are welcome." In this column we could have discussed the Soviet Union as well as arguments of the Darcy group in particular.

A special sub-committee of the party should have organized specific phases of work, aimed at the CP. We should have had a special pamphlet addressed to the CP, posing our consistent ideas as against the flimsy leftism in opposition to Browder in the CP.

Our intervention, I repeat, was superficial and also of short duration and sporadic. In the middle of February, Comrade M. Stein told a Central Branch meeting that our "investigation" was practically over since it had been allegedly found that there wasn't much doing in the CP, and the best tendency from our point of view was apathy.

The PC itself belatedly changed this estimate 3 months later. Just before the National Convention of the CP, the Militant started warning CPers "who believe in Socialism," and those "who think of forming a separate party" that the road of a separate, new party was a blind alley. Months before the Convention, we should have been carefully analyzing and agitating against this conception of a new centrist party. We should previously have more carefully addressed ourselves to thinking Stalinists, "those who believe in Socialism," and continued from that approach our criticism of their half-way thinking. In May 1944, a few days before the convention of the CP, the party learned that there were good elements in the CP, and furthermore, a number of these elements were even contemplating the formation of a new party! Undoubtedly this was astonishing news to our membership. Belatedly also, the City Committee report of the New York local, August 1944, speaks of the January to May 1944 period in the CP as the "period of its greatest ferment."

We were of course hampered in the possibility of doing CP internal work by the fact that we had no followers in the CP to start with, as far as most party members can surmise. But in addition, we were hampered by a lack of a clear, forceful approach aimed at winning dissidents and intervening in the ideological struggle in the CP between January and May.

Where is the Darcy group and where are other dissidents now? Darcy's group in the CP is probably underground (Darcy himself was expelled) and probably biding its time to come forth as a pseudo leftist cover in one form or another at some future occasion. Many dissidents have dropped out of the CP in disgust. A number were undoubtedly reconciled and they rationalized their support of the CP on a new basis. Had we carried through a clear and consistent policy of attempting to interject ourselves in the situation, there might have been much better results to talk about now.

We missed an important opportunity, although a few of us recruited individual CPers in this period, and the general propaganda of the Militant probably influenced a few of the dissidents.

Right now, there is, as far as most of us know, relatively nothing as important brewing in the ranks of the CP as there was six months ago. The CPA is moving rather smoothly along its reactionary road as far as any real internal trouble is concerned. Here and there in the U.S. the CP leadership throws up a temporary left cover to appease some members. In these instances they say -- remember the Soviet Union, or -- if the capitalists don't accept this no-strike pledge after the war -- well, we'll have to strike, or -- to Negro members they say -- remember we're anti Jim-Crow. In general they keep their reactionary cloak on at present. In my opinion, it is possible that they will for a time don pseudo leftist cloaks in the future in the U.S. possibly as a direct result of a shift in Stalin's policies, or a temporarily necessitated shift in order to appease working class followers.

The CP is a major enemy of ours and we must at all times educate, agitate, and fight against it. In the period I've written about in this article, January to May 1944, we did not take advantage of an opportunity to undermine Stalinism because of a lack of a clear, consistent ideological appeal aimed especially at elements in the CP. Such a special opportunity on a similar scale may come again, especially in centers like N.Y., Chicago, and Philadelphia where the CP has a mass base, possibly when thousands of Stalinist youth come back from the army or when the CP becomes an open strikebreaker in specific industries after the war.

At present however, our general propagandistic approach to Stalinism in the Militant is generally correct in not concerning itself with any wide circle of dissidents inside the CP. If this is a conscious policy of the paper, it is correct insofar as there is no important movement of flux inside the CPA now. However there are some good Stalinist elements still inside the CPA who are not fully reconciled to the CPA policy. Also, there are many workers sympathetic to Stalinism in one form or another, getting our paper each week. In our general propagandistic approach on Stalinism we can include consideration of these elements by the simple method of extra carefullness in proving our contentions, while sharply characterizing Stalinism. We have everything to gain from such an extra policy of caution, and we can through our careful logical argumentation accompanying our characterizations dispel any ideas in the minds of some workers that there is too much subjectivity involved in our attacks on the Stalinists.

I would like to suggest that the paper review Stalinist books and articles more often.

We should of course definitely try to keep our eyes and ears in the CP generally and on the Darcy group. This may reap returns in the future and can be of help at all times.

Also, we should take advantage of any likely CP type we run into. To some, this last remark may be a-b-c. Unfortunately, it was not to my observation, a-b-c to some comrades in New York during the last year or two. Right now, however, this seems to be becoming the habit and idea of many more than previously in New York.

The above suggestions and discussion in the last half of this article can, I believe, help round out our policy of fighting Stalinism.

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INFORMATION NOTE:

Some question has arisen as to who are the "group of European Comrades" who submitted the article On the Situation in Europe, printed in Bulletin No. 10. The article is written by several refugee comrades in the United States.