

CPA Discussion Page

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Bureaucracy Flourished; We Must Uproot It

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When Comrade Duclos characterized the policies of "Browder and his supporters" as a "notorious revision of Marxism", it seems to me that he gave us the task of making a developed critique of our policies and form of organization. Our own resolution should, therefore, be more thorough in criticism of ourselves than Duclos has been. The amended resolution is an improvement over the first draft. The reports and articles help to strengthen the policies and the self-criticism. We will have to dig in far more as to our respective personal responsibilities. Every member of the National Committee, as well as the collective leadership, will have to fight for the guarantees to correct our notorious error.

Our membership is not yet fully satisfied and I don't think that they will be satisfied in the near future. We should say to our membership and the world that we are not fully satisfied that we have corrected our errors. We must not only correct our error through resolutions and articles. More than that—we must assume responsibility for the results of our recent revisionist policy. Those results are to be found in every field and will continue to effect our work and our role for a long time to come. The resolution and the discussions around the resolution are putting us on the right track. We have the basis for rooting out the vestiges of our notorious revisionism.

In addition to much that has been said, including the points raised by Comrade Duclos, the speeches and articles which have been printed, I think that those of us in leadership must say at this stage more than we said at the time of our first analysis shortly after the publication of Duclos' article and more than we said at the National Committee meeting: The collective discussion in the press and publication of the articles in POLITICAL AFFAIRS proves helpful. The discussion by the membership, their expressions of sharpest criticism and their demand for changes in leadership, is very helpful. They want guarantees that every vestige of our error is corrected and that our Party is firmly united on the basis of fundamental principles worthy of the name Communist. The sharpness of criticism is a real expression in the fundamental Communist character of our organization. Our self-criticism must be therefore fully in accord with the full appreciation of the magnitude of the error we made and the sharpness of criticism in the membership, in order to rally our membership to correct policy.

Certainly, the influence of capitalist society contributed to our mistake and is one of the sources of the error. That is true generally. It is true as far as affecting our leadership as a whole. And it was and still is an influence on each of us individually. I think that for myself and others there must be more guarantees that we overcome that influence. It is not enough to put it in a resolution. It is not enough to proceed with the same schools and educational program as we outlined before the Duclos article. Much more must be done.

We must say that in Ohio and nationally, there has been the greatest decline of basic Marxist education among our leadership and membership in the past several years. The training of ourselves as Marxists must be put on an entirely different plane than any proposals we have made thus far. This is one of the particular responsibilities in Ohio. But more than that—I think that all of us, including national and state leaders, must study and learn real Marxist fundamentals. At the same time, all of us, and particularly myself, must strengthen our ties

with the membership and the masses. The discussion proves a well-known fact—we can and must learn from the masses as well as fulfill our responsibility to them.

Furthermore, we must train a whole core of cadres so that the Party is never again faced with a dearth of leadership, whereby some of us hold our positions by default. That helps to breed bureaucracy in our organization. We must clean out not only bureaucratic method and practices, but also every root of bureaucracy. We should now start to establish such conditions within our Party that it is always possible to have a substantial number of comrades in strong positions of leadership.

That and their reason why collective leadership and self-criticism is imperative. Our failure to strengthen collective leadership and our neglect of self-criticism has been very costly to the Party and to our class. In this connection, I believe that each of us who was present at the enlarged National Board meeting when Comrade Foster presented his article a year ago must say that we made a serious mistake in not bringing Comrade Foster's article to the membership, in not evaluating our course according to Marxist principles, and that we acted in a crass bureaucratic manner in discussing that document. In the same manner as our Party is growing in strength because of the publication of the Duclos articles, so also our Party would have grown stronger and would have avoided the pitfalls of our recent policy if we had published the Foster article in the Daily Worker a year ago and conducted a Marxist discussion around it.

I believe that those of us in state leadership have a great responsibility for the error, while agreeing with the resolution in its general characterization of responsibility. I know that in my case, I follow usually the procedure of bringing national policy and decisions to the membership. My role is to win the membership. So, first I made that national policy my own and in doing so, I worked out the arguments and experiences for the National policy. Then the policy was brought to the respective committees and the clubs and to individual members. I was fully convinced and helped develop the policy. If I couldn't convince the individual member, then it was my fault, and there were more arguments presented, including the prestige of the National Board, respective national leaders, etc. Well, if those arguments didn't work then—let time take care of the problem.

That was true on Teheran. Comrades Kenneth, Fred, Steve, Ed or Nick didn't quite agree, but because they are basically loyal good comrades, the assumption was that they would finally accept the policy. Instead of that conclusion—the point was that they were basically good comrades, and I should have listened carefully, and transmitted their arguments to the National Board. Then we should have drawn some conclusions from those who didn't speak up one way or the other.

Here is where those of us in state leadership must learn not only to talk with the membership, but also to bring their thinking to the National Board. And the National Board should encourage and hold us to that responsibility, as well as check up on us by direct talks with and listening to the members. The check-up on our fulfillment of responsibility must not be limited to telegrams and directives, but must also include close ties between the entire leadership and the membership.

The resolution does not directly mention bureaucracy in our organi-

zation. I am convinced that bureaucracy did not only exist in the manner in which Browder determined policies in the National Board, but also in the manner in which state presidents such as myself determined policy within states. That is a feeling of our State Board members and cannot be ignored. For this, I must assume a first responsibility. We have differences on how to eradicate it, but it must be rooted out. We have differences on the degree and the causes of it, but it must be rooted out to whatever degree it exists and the cause of it

must be removed. That will strengthen democratic centralism and the confidence of membership in the decisions of leading committees. That will develop the role of our membership and help make them ever more active. That will strengthen the Communist character of our Party.

I still believe that the resolution should be strengthened on the adverse effects on our war-time policies. Whatever we did that was good, would have been done far better with a correct policy and we would not have done many things

badly in the past two years or more. The program of action should be further strengthened in a number of points.

The full seriousness of our revisionist policy must be specified more concretely. And while conducting this campaign against revisionism, the struggle must also now be developed against leftist deviations. It is to the credit of our membership that we find very little leftist discussion. The warnings of Comrade Foster and the resolution on this are really being observed by the membership.

Wants Stronger Line, Bold Action

I am one of those who came into the CPA within the past seven months. While I do not pretend to be a Marxist, nevertheless, I feel that real contact with the problems of the workers must surely be qualification and reason enough for participation in these discussions.

Admittedly, I joined the movement influenced by the Browder "line," feeling that here was an organization with which I could work to correct the social and economic evils of our society. But, surely, ignoring even a more scientific analysis, the very events of the day are sufficient evidence that our conclusions, that capitalism would cooperate in the postwar for a progressive program and national unity, were false.

Opposition to this program, and proof of the inadequacy of our revisionist policies are certainly manifested in the recent actions of big business and certain reactionary government officials: the vicious, anti-labor Ball-Burton-Hatch bill, the fight against the FEPC, price control, and Bretton Woods, WLB collaboration with industry to slash wages, etc.

We can take our examples right in our own shops. Detroit workers have recently suffered a 30 percent wage cut. In New York City, in one month, prices rose 7 percent and earnings dropped 6 percent. In my own shop the management has recently boldly announced that it intends launching a program to make higher profits and will start by rolling back wages! They have stated they are not interested in good labor relations and seriously have questioned the strength and rights of the union. Such statements from a management that has been considered one of the more progressive in New York City, a plant that has been looked upon as a "mecca" for the workers, a plant in which we, in the union leadership, built the false conception of harmonious postwar relationships, and a period when industry would voluntarily double wages!

In following this opportunistic path (and here, by merely "following" I believe we made one of our most serious mistakes) as an active trade unionist particularly concerned with labor-management activities, I personally contributed toward the misdirection of the workers and

in building the illusion that labor-management committees would, in the postwar, play a leading role in establishing an unprecedented period of harmonious labor-management relations through which labor could make important gains!

My own sad experiences since V-E Day with even some of the more "progressive" managements, with the inactivity of Eric Johnston on the labor-management charter, and with the reactionary activities of certain government officials and big business to smash the unions and split labor's ranks, convince me of my own errors.

Clearly, industry has paid only "lip-service" to the labor-management charter and to the idea of labor-management committees. Possibilities do exist at present for labor-management committees to discuss reconversion problems and plans. However, labor must initiate and press for its right to help lay these plans. Wartime demands forced industry to accept labor's assistance in solving production problems. The original concept of labor-management committees was that they operated on a basis of cooperation and emphasized points of agreement. Again we must question whether or not the inherent reactionary characteristics of monopoly capitalism will permit them to accept, in the postwar, labor's participation in solving production problems, heretofore considered their own sacred domain! On this basis alone, industry will reject labor-management committees in the postwar.

Labor too, must seriously examine its postwar position. At best, the workers have always looked upon these committees as a "speed-up" and only accepted this in an effort to aid war production. Can we reasonably expect them to accept this in the postwar? Leading the workers in this direction would not only be contrary to basic principles of trade-unionism, but also oppose our own entire educational program. On one hand we would be warning the workers against the evils of capitalism and on the other we would be suggesting "speed-ups," labor interference in production problems (ways and means of helping the boss make more money at our expense!) and close cooperation between labor and capital!

It would be erroneous to assume that labor-management committees could be utilized to strengthen the rights of organization and collective bargaining guaranteed the labor unions by the Wagner Act. Rather this can only work to the contrary.

Industry will be only too glad to deal with contractually unrecognized, unauthorized and powerless committees on questions of hours and working conditions. This will be a splendid wedge for them to use to pry from us some of our already contractually guaranteed rights! Our union contracts cover all questions of wages, hours and working conditions, and we must use our recognized and authoritative negotiating and grievance committees to protect our rights and supplement our gains. These committees will be in a much firmer position to secure benefits for the workers.

We can conclude that, at best, labor-management committees can play only a minor role after V-J Day, in those few shops where its activities may not be contrary to the interest of labor and management. However, even in these cases labor must be ever on the alert and must not subordinate its own independent role.

This leads me to some general comment on the amended draft resolutions. I feel that there is still a dangerous tendency to accept a secondary roll, that there is again an inclination toward opportunism and that these resolutions should include a more realistic program of action toward our ultimate goal.

Instead of just saying that we "support the efforts of the Truman administration to carry forward the policies of Roosevelt etc.," we must "DEMAND that the Truman administration carry these policies forward." In our fight to meet the human needs for Reconversion, we must DEMAND the removal of the reactionary government officials who have become the spokesman for big business! Certainly it was no accident that 26 Congressmen petitioned for a revision in the Little Steel Formula and no accident that our State Department did an about-face on the Polish question. It was not the progressive thinking of these government officials, but rather the progressive ACTIONS and DEMANDS of the people!

The resolutions state that "Socialism alone can finally abolish the social evils etc.," and then qualified the statement with a great big "But"! Aren't we putting the cart before the horse and isn't this a repetition of one of our basic errors? We should, surely, here speak of the development of our own independent role and the formulation of an educational program toward socialism as included with our program of action for the immediate tasks ahead!

We Communists are the vanguard of the most progressive class in society. Comrades we must fulfill our true role and begin again to lead!

J. W. Midwood Club

Thorez on the U. S. Communists

The following excerpt from the report presented June 26, 1945 to the 10th Congress of the French Communist Party, by its secretary general, Maurice Thorez, will be of particular interest to American Communists and those who are following their work.

"If one seriously analyzes the causes of the defeat of 1940 and the dramatic situation in which our country found itself, and still finds itself involved, one will discover that the fundamental cause is the egoism of certain privileged circles who have deliberately sacrificed the interests of the nation to the defense of their privileges. That is a fact. The class struggle is a fact.

"One must add that Communists take facts into account. Opportunist concepts always lead to the liquidation of the independent role of the working class, the most active element in the union of the tolling strata of the nation. Such concepts lead to the liquidation of the Party. Several leaders of the American Communist Party fell into this grave error. We didn't hesitate to offer our advice through an article by our Comrade, Duclos, which, we hope, will help the American Communists to rediscover the correct path."