

SPEECH BY ROY HUDSON

I THINK I am one of many who have read and re-read our basic documents, as well as Browder's writings since the Duclos article. And I am also one of those whose first reaction to a re-reading of these documents was that our policy did not contend that there were no longer any contradictions between imperialist powers, between capitalism and socialism, between the bosses and workers—we never said that the perspective of Teheran would come automatically, that raising wage levels and settling differences with the bosses in the postwar period would be handed to the workers on a silver platter. We did not say that the no-strike pledge should be continued into the postwar period. Moreover, we constantly stressed the importance of the defense of the economic interests of the workers as being essential for the maintenance of national unity and the prosecution of the war. While this is true, the main thing, of course, is that the wrong conclusions we drew from Teheran created many illusions and much confusion regarding the continuation of the no-strike pledge into the postwar period.

But a re-reading of these documents, in the light of events and the Duclos article, forces one to face a fundamental fact—that we did not, in life, help the workers and the people generally to understand that

the anti-Hitler bourgeoisie were partners only to a certain degree: that because of their class nature and imperialist *aims*, collaboration with them was possible only on a limited basis. We did not educate and organize the workers and the people generally to insure that these imperialist forces would not, either as a result of lack of initiative and vigilance on the part of the people, or by joining hands with the pro-fascist sections of monopoly capital, impose their reactionary policies on the Government.

If one argues that this is what we intended to do but did not say so, then the answer is, in my opinion, that we failed to do it, and this failure was inevitable because of our basic mistake.

As to whether we consciously rejected basic principles of Marxism and as to whether we were motivated by a desire to revise and repudiate Marxism, it seems to me the point here is not necessarily what we intended to do, but what we did. Lenin, in defining the policy of revisionism, which Dennis referred to, says amongst others things "... it consists in *forgetting* the basic interests of the proletariat, the main features of the capitalist system as a whole and capitalist evolution as a whole..." I do not think Lenin's use of the word "*forgetting*" instead of rejecting was an oversight. It seems to

me that the least we can say is that we "forgot" to keep in mind the main features of the capitalist system as a whole and as a result were embarking upon a policy of revisionism.

However, I do not think that we can let the matter drop there, in view of such statements as Browder's in the June issue of *Political Affairs*:

The alignment apparently taking place of Britain and America against the Soviet Union expresses a *conflict of mood and opinion but not a conflict of interest.*

I think the explanation is to be found, not in moods or opinions, but in the nature of monopoly capital, in the efforts of Big Business to realize their interests as imperialists which are in conflict with the interests of labor, the people and the independence of nations.

Did Comrade Browder just recently come to these views or have they existed all the time and were they the basis for our wrong estimate of Teheran and the conclusions we drew? In the light of developments it would seem to me that these are views which Browder held all the time, and we swallowed them hook, line and sinker until we began to do some serious thinking as a result of Comrade Duclos' article.

Developments since V-E Day, and especially those at the San Francisco Conference, certainly show that the

participation of the bourgeois governments of America and Britain in concluding the agreements of Teheran and Crimea did not mean that the character of monopoly capital had changed, and that the imperialist powers were embarking on a fundamentally new policy. The nature and aims of imperialism remain. What is new is that one of the partners in the coalition—the Soviet Union—as a gigantic, military and political force having influence in world affairs, entered into the agreement for non-imperialist reasons. What is new is that the power of monopoly capital and of the trusts no longer exists intact in Europe, and that new and higher forms of democracy are emerging in which labor plays a decisive, leading role. What is new is that the struggles of national independence are challenging the rule of imperialism in the colonial countries. What is new is the gains made in establishing international labor unity. Another new fact is the greater organizational strength of the American labor movement, the fact that the decisive section of organized labor has emerged as a powerful political force in America.

These facts do fundamentally affect the ability of the forces of imperialism and reaction to realize their imperialist aims. We support and fight for the decisions and perspectives of Teheran and Crimea, not because we have blind faith that the bourgeois governments will honor

them, but because they are supported by the world working class, the Soviet Union and all other forces of democracy and freedom; because these forces, if united, are strong enough to win the fight and complete the defeat of the forces of world fascism. We support those decisions because they are in the interests of our nation and the world, were upheld by the people in the national elections, and can today unite the consistent anti-fascist forces in our country—in the first place, the American working class.

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Labor's political role in the 1944 elections was of historic significance, even though labor emerged as an independent force, not in opposition to the bourgeoisie as a whole, but in collaboration with the anti-Hitler section of the employers. Furthermore, when the C.I.O. unites with the rest of the world trade union movement in joining hands with the organized workers of the Soviet Union, then something fundamentally new has emerged that is bound to have a profound effect on the course of history, even though the reactionary policies of the A. F. of L. Executive Council must still be defeated for the split in the ranks of world labor to be completely healed.

We have, of course, stressed the importance of these events, generally, and in relationship to the immediate key problems but in my opinion we have not sufficiently em-

phasized and studied the fundamental significance of these changes in the American labor movement. These events are important, not because labor is the backbone of the nation's unity in a *supporting* sense, but in a *leading* sense; not because the pro-Roosevelt or anti-Hitler bourgeoisie will guarantee the realization of the Crimea decisions and Roosevelt's program if they have the united support of labor, but because labor is the main social force that will consistently defend democracy and the true interests of the nation, the force capable of rallying and uniting all democratic and anti-fascist sections of our population to destroy the political and economic basis of fascism.

Have we devoted one-tenth of the necessary time to studying, explaining, and winning support for the significance of the world labor unity developments? Has the full significance of labor's new role in the political field been adequately studied and grasped, and do we fully understand the weaknesses that are bound to exist, especially as a result of the concrete form in which labor has emerged as a political force? Can we be satisfied that the limitations of labor's political role are being grappled with in a manner that will insure the independent strength of labor against dispersal by the bourgeoisie and against Social-Democratic influences, so that it will achieve greater maturity and greater strength, so that labor will

increase its influence over the democratic and anti-fascist camp as a leading force?

An answer as to why such questions have not been examined more fundamentally is to be found in re-reading the book *Teheran* and nearly every important speech, resolution and article. Whom did we seek to convince, to whom were our arguments addressed? Every section of the population and especially the win-the-war bourgeoisie and the Administration, but not particularly the labor movement. Of course, we must have a program for the nation, we must speak to all democratic forces and seek to convince them. But our prime concern, as a Marxist organization, must be to arm the working class with the necessary understanding, and develop its initiative and leading role as the most essential prerequisite for convincing other forces with whom we and labor are seeking to collaborate.

As a result of our fundamental mistakes, we gave inadequate attention to these basic changes and put insufficient stress on what was new and maturing. We did not do everything necessary and possible to consolidate and extend the gains of labor, deepen its understanding and enable it more rapidly to become the leading force in welding the democratic unity of the nation. As a result of a wrong estimate of Teheran we stressed the "progressive" position of sections of monopoly capital as new and decisive, thus giving rise

to illusions that the remaining conflict of interests was only secondary.

As a consequence, our policy had the effect of strengthening labor as a supporting force but not sufficiently developing its leading role. The manner in which we conducted our fight for labor to be accepted as a full partner in the camp of national unity had the effect of promoting illusions that the anti-Hitler bourgeoisie fully supported anti-fascist policies and would play an equal role with labor in consistently fighting for these policies. We did not sufficiently arm labor with a full understanding of its role in combating the imperialist aims of the anti-Hitler sections of big business, and consequently it was not fully prepared to react to the serious developments that have taken place since V-E Day. Another practical consequence is that we have not tackled, even yet, the problem of winning the A. F. of L. for international unity as a major political question.

I have given considerable attention to the changes that have taken place in the ranks of the working class as expressed on the political field and in relation to world labor unity, because I consider our weakness in this general question one of the most serious consequences that flowed from our basic error in estimating Teheran. While this examination shows weaknesses it also emphasizes the tremendous forces, especially in the ranks of the working class, that can be drawn into action for the Res-

olution's Program of Action—forces that we have been insufficiently influencing because of the weaknesses we are now correcting. I have not attempted the concrete examination of the specific weaknesses of our work in the unions, which must be undertaken, because I believe that to a certain degree many of these weaknesses had their roots in the question I have tried to deal with. In examining our work I think we must guard against over-correction, as Comrade Foster has warned.

Our policy and the forms of struggle we have advocated undoubtedly have enabled the organized labor movement to make considerable achievements in defending the economic interests of the workers and in building the unions. But there can be no doubt that our basic weaknesses limited the effectiveness of our efforts, and in the recent period were beginning to demobilize the fight. The defense of the economic interests of the workers against the present onslaught demands the development of militant forms of struggle. This must not, however, weaken in any manner the firm support for the no-strike pledge to insure the speedy defeat of Japanese imperialism.

We have played a decisive role in maintaining the unity of the basic win-the-war forces in the labor movement; but an examination will also lead us to conclude that our revisionist errors hindered the consolidation and strengthening of this

unity, the deepening of the understanding of the masses and key forces, the exposing and defeating of Lewis, Hutcheson, Dubinsky, and Reuther, and the strengthening, to the full of our relations with the basic sections of the working class.

We correctly stressed the important role of key individuals in the labor movement, but over a considerable period of time we have, in some cases, over-emphasized this, with the result that our policy was becoming one-sided. Thus, support for responsible leadership tended to become a substitute for the fight for program, the further development of trade-union democracy and the education of the workers. To the degree that this is true, the correction of course, is not the other extreme, where we ignore the key role of individuals and fail to see the decisive importance of supporting and strengthening their leadership and our collaboration with them.

In the recent period we had begun to feel the cumulative effects of these and other weaknesses—in terms of lagging behind, in the existence of illusions and confusions, and in serious set-backs in several decisive places. These are danger signals that, unless the turn called for in our Resolution is quickly achieved, a major crisis in the labor movement and the nation can develop.

I support the line of the Resolution without qualifications, and this goes as well for the reports made by Foster and Dennis. Foster was

far too lenient in his criticism of the rest of the National Board members and especially of myself. I feel very deeply the responsibility that I share with the other Board members for the mistakes made. My work in applying our general policy did not have an indirect effect upon the labor movement, but a direct effect—perhaps more so than that of many other comrades. I recognize that this fact must be taken into account in judging my own responsibility as a Board member in the critical examination of every leader which our membership is determined to undertake in order to decide what steps must be taken to strengthen the leadership and secure full guarantees that our organization will make its maximum contribution.

Not all of us quickly understood the full meaning of the Duclos article. That we had made mistakes was quickly clear; but an understanding of the fundamental nature of these mistakes did not come so easily for me. I trust that this experience will deepen my own understanding and enable me to grasp more quickly fundamental questions. However, when I raise serious questions and they are ignored, or when there is no effort or when there is an inadequate effort to explain and convince, or when my motives are challenged—then I will continue to protest, although perhaps, in the future, I will find a better way of doing it

than abstaining from voting.

I for one do not plead that I had serious doubts about the policy we are now correcting but went along with it out of respect for the judgment of Browder and others. I went along because my inadequate grasp of Marxism prevented me from understanding that something was fundamentally wrong. I do not think the same thing is true in regard to the question of the type of collective and individual methods of leadership that has dominated our work for years and the manner in which we practiced democracy. For years every instinct in me rebelled at certain methods of leadership. It seemed to me that in effect "collective" work boiled down to everyone expressing what he had to say and then Browder's word would be final. After he had taken a position everyone seemed to be reluctant to press a point, either out of fear that maybe this would result in encouraging what was considered Foster's narrow line, or else be interpreted as challenging Browder's leadership. Collective leadership and responsibility became replaced by personal leadership and responsibility. This was not just confined to Board meetings but led to a situation where some questions that should have come before the Board were disposed of without even bothering to bring them to the Board. I would like to add, however, that these methods were not confined to Browder alone by any means, but

undoubtedly were expressed in the work of many of us.

Why did I, and perhaps others, submit to such methods, even though it went against our grain? One of the reasons perhaps is that we figured Browder's greater ability, superior experience and mastery of Marxism offset these other things; that we were making major headway in many directions and that the question of methods of leadership was secondary. The result has been that the greater the progress we seemed to make and the more confident we became that we were on a correct path, the worse the situation

became. All this meant that we were adjusting ourselves to non-Bolshevik conceptions of leadership, and in the long run, instead of establishing the authority and prestige of the leadership, we were approaching a situation where it would be undermined, if not completely destroyed. I do not know whether we could have prevented, or more quickly overcome the mistakes we have made, if this situation had not prevailed. I do know that we can never fully correct our mistakes and become the organization that we must be unless all such methods of leadership are ended once and for all.