

world. We are not interested in the futile game of "defending" the workers states through appeals to the self-interests of those who clearly seek to destroy the workers states-- the capitalists. Rather the workers states must be defended by the extension of the revolution throughout the world.

Students can help in the process of building a movement which clearly understands the necessity of uncompromising struggle against capitalism. But they can do so only if they completely break with the compromisers and if they find a road to the decisive force in the United States and everywhere: the working class--black and white.

SPECIAL REPORT ON PL'S FOUNDING CONVENTION

Whole Leadership Capitulates to Black Nationalism

But Healthy Signs of Dissent Are Present

The founding convention of the Progressive Labor Party, held in New York City from April 15th to 18th, was an important test for the militants who have been assembled in the Progressive Labor Movement over the past several years. The basic task was and is one of linking up with mass struggles and bringing to these struggles a revolutionary theory and political line.

It is clear from the basic statistics of the convention itself that Progressive Labor does not yet have the links with the mass movement which make the formation of a new revolutionary party (as opposed to the nucleus of such a party, which must of course always exist and be struggling for the creation of such a party) realistic. The formation of a new party was, from the organizational standpoint, premature. But more important is the qualitative political growth necessary in the building of a revolutionary party. This report will be devoted to an assessment of where PL stands in relation to this task after the founding convention of the PLP.

The discussion and the resolution on the Negro question coming forth from the convention are typical of the problems of P.L. The resolution identifies with black nationalism. While it maintains a much more critical line towards the established petty bourgeois leaderships than, for example, the SWP, and calls for a working class leadership of the Negro movement, it also views black and white revolutionaries as having to work separately for the foreseeable future. It does not relate the struggle in any but the most abstract way to the entire working class movement, and it ignores the Southern struggle and SNCC. A sure sign of the adaptation to the nationalist mood is an approach which permeates the SWP's views on the Negro question as well: the present situation of racial antagonism, to such a large extent fostered by the ruling class itself, is simply accep-

ted, instead of showing now how we can and must work to unite black and white workers. Abstractly correct long-range perspectives are combined with a nationalist outlook for the present and the foreseeable future. There are no connecting links. The maximum program, so to speak, is working class unity and struggle for socialism. The minimum program is black nationalism, independent struggle unrelated to the overall class struggle. Between the two programs there are no links.

The Rosen of Yesterday

Milton Rosen, who was elected President of the PLP at the Convention, resisted the adaptation to nationalism last October, at a discussion meeting of the National Coordinating Committee of the PLM. At that time Rosen's comments included the following:

"...you have to start figuring out now how you are going to unite these forces (black and white workers), at least on a long range basis, and what steps have to be taken to overcome the obstacles to that unity today. I believe this is the difference between a working class revolutionary outlook and the others. No nationalist force is expressing these ideas today. We are critical of this...

"I don't think we have a national liberation movement in the U.S. today--although I've used the term as much as anybody else. I think it's just a mimicking of a term that's developed in the international movement, that seems on the surface appropos to the situation here. We used it because we don't have a clear position of our own and it sounds nice. Superficially you can make a case for it, but I don't believe it's what exists here at all. My own feeling is that what exists here is that the Negro question is fundamentally a class struggle, and is being motored in many respects by many national considerations.

-- "Now we all agree on one thing it seems to me--some people want two parties--but we all say that we should have a black movement--based on black working class strength. Well, what would be the demands of that movement. The demands wouldn't be "national liberation." That's baloney. They want jobs, better housing, better schools, and yes, a lot of people would identify with supporting national liberation movements in other countries, because they don't want to go and fight in the Congo, etc. That's not national liberation."

Thus we see that last October Rosen attempted to take certain national factors into consideration within what was a class framework. He resisted the adaptation to nationalism and the subordination of the class struggle of the

entire working class to a nationalist approach. Yet at the Convention Rosen shifted his position, even going so far as to accuse those who opposed the majority's line of white chauvinist tendencies.

The reason for this reversal is that the PL leadership, and Milt Rosen as much if not more than others, have slighted theoretical discussion and development. In trying to deal with PL's problems, the leadership has sought to evade sharp issues, to blur over differences, particularly on the political level, while seeking to make up for this by solving problems on an organizational level. In the belief that practical activity in the Negro struggle as elsewhere is all important, with theoretical and political development of the vanguard simply flowing automatically from this activity, important differences on the Negro question were compromised. The resolution gives a little to everyone, combining adaptation to black nationalism, adoption of the very same black liberation front concept which Milt Rosen resisted 6 months ago, with some correct but abstract statements on class struggle and socialism. Nationalism and class struggle are simply added to the resolution like parts of a recipe, instead of relating the two factors, taking nationalist moods into account but not adapting to them and showing the fundamentally class nature of the struggle. Readers should refer to the special BULLETIN on Black Nationalism, Vol. 2, No. 6, for a fuller exposition of what we consider the fundamentals of a correct approach.

It is important to note that there was a small but significant minority opinion which opposed the leadership on this adaptation to Black Nationalism. This opposition clearly fought for a class line on the Negro question and its views were received sympathetically by a far larger number of delegates than were willing to express their opposition through a vote against the leadership's resolution.

It makes us sad to record that overwhelmingly the Negro cadres of P, endorsed the Black Nationalist view. Progressive Labor could very well be faced with a serious loss of its Negro cadres if these cadres are not given a revolutionary class perspective. For Black Nationalism they do not need PL. It was particularly sad to note that no Negroes attended the trade union panel at the convention. This almost complete dichotomy between trade union and Negro work can only deeply damage both sectors of work.

As might be expected, the trade union discussion at the Convention suffered from this lack of relating the Negro and overall working class struggles. An overtly black nationalist line, a petty bourgeois ultra left approach, of seeing the unions simply as job trusts for white workers, was not interjected into the trade union discussion although it is held by some in P.L. However, it was bad enough that the trade union and Negro movements were viewed in a completely separate way. This static, undialectical way of viewing the mass movement harms trade union work as well as work in the

Negro movement.

On the other hand there was a real determination on the part of the leadership and members of PL to break away from the petty bourgeois milieu the organization has been sinking into and to establish serious roots in the mass movement. However, it will take more than a desire to do this to accomplish this difficult task. As both the disorientation on the Negro question and the lack of concreteness in the trade union discussion show, only a deepening of the theoretical understanding of the PL cadres will prepare these cadres for meaningful intervention in the mass movement.

On the Organization Question

On the organizational level, the Convention adopted a Party Constitution. It is significant that the Conference deleted a reference to Trotskyism as objectively counterrevolutionary and passed a motion requesting the drawing up of a statement on Trotskyism and revisionism. It is healthy to have these questions seriously discussed or at least opened up for discussion, rather than accepting on faith pronouncements on Trotskyism which are reminiscent of the Stalin era, lacking even the barest argumentation and evidence.

Also positive was the Convention's action in adopting an amendment to distribute minority discussion material to the membership. It is also significant, however, and not healthy, that the Convention adopted what is in essence a ban on groupings and factions in the new party:

"Members and leaders have the right to dissent from decisions. Anyone having serious criticism, or who has been disciplined by a Party body, has the right to bring his criticism or appeal to a higher body up to and including the National Convention. However, no leader or member has the right to organize against any decision, and pending appeal all members shall be bound to support all decisions of bodies to which they are responsible.

"Groups having a discipline outside the Party -- factions and cliques -- shall not be tolerated. Persons engaged in these activities may be criticized, suspended or expelled by a club or an appropriate higher body."

The Constitution in effect substitutes "criticism and self-criticism" for the right to form factions. But this is not adequate. As we have discussed before (Vol. 2 No. 7 and Bulletin Supplement) a revolutionary party cannot develop and never has developed without struggle inside the party and this struggle is impossible without the right

to form factions. We must have a progressive resolution of the struggle between Marxism and alien trends and class currents which find their way into working class parties and even dominate these parties at times. But this successful struggle is only possible if factions are permitted, as they were in Lenin's Bolshevik Party under all but extreme conditions of civil war and isolation. No one, of course, is asking or should ask for the right to take internal differences outside the organization or the right to disregard and violate the decisions of the majority.

There is a contradiction between the ban on factions and the decision allowing for the distribution of minority views, as well as a general attitude at the Convention of a certain genuine welcoming of discussion and even dissent. Unfortunately, however, the dominant attitude is one of seeking to solve political problems by organizational means. While PL certainly needed a more centralized organization than the kind preceding the convention, it also needed and still needs a firm commitment to internal democracy, including the freedom for organized dissent, within the party. The struggle is not taken outside the organization, but it must be allowed to develop inside the organization and assume organized form at certain times (pre-convention discussion periods). This need not and should not paralyze the organization; whereas banning factions does paralyze the organization, in a political sense.

Here again we see a non-Marxist, an empirical and eclectic approach. The theory and nature of the revolutionary party is not simply a collection of rules and elementary structure. It is something that must develop as part of the class struggle and the construction of the vanguard party itself. But here again we see PL looking at this question in a formal way, not seeing democratic centralism as a living concept, but as a dogma, and a dogma which is misrepresented and misstated, at that.

Neglect of Theory

In summary, we see the same fundamental problem wherever we turn. Although PL could have taken some very serious steps backward which it did not take, it is wavering on the basic tasks at hand, the Negro movement, the trade unions, and the construction of the party. In the present context we must remember that not to move forward is in effect to move backward.

It is also important to note that not a single discussion of international events reached the floor of the convention. Any revolutionary party which is serious about its aims must find the time, no matter how crowded the schedule, to give proper emphasis to the international movement. The slighting of international discussion goes hand in hand with the slighting of theoretical discussion in general.

PL must of course concern itself with international developments, in the advanced countries as well as the colonial and ex-colonial sphere. While Challenge has generally taken a multi-class approach in its reporting on developments in Asia, Africa and Latin America, PL has not confronted the basic questions of the nature of the colonial revolution and its development in such countries as Algeria.

The basic problem is the divorcing of theory and practice combined with the neglect of theoretical development. PL's practical work is suffering and will suffer more and more if this non-Marxist approach is not corrected.

SPECIAL REPORT FROM ENGLAND

Young Socialists Launch Revolutionary Battle

February 27 and 28 marked a massive step along the road to socialism in Britain. The Fifth Annual Conference of the Young Socialists, held in Morecambe on those days, was like no other in the history of the Young Socialists; and more than that, it was unique in the history of British working class youth. More than 1,000 youth from all over Britain and fraternal delegates from the adult trade union movement, Old Age Pensioners' Associations, and delegates from fraternal organizations in Europe and America crowded into the Winter Gardens at Morecambe for the Conference.

The Morecambe Conference was unique in that it was the first conference called by the National Committee Majority of the Young Socialists since their expulsion from the social-democratic Labour Party. The Labour Government did everything in its power to stop the Conference from taking place. They called upon the Mayor of Morecambe to refuse the facilities in his town to the Young Socialists; on the BBC radio and television they called upon the youth not to attend the "unofficial" conference, and for adult workers to refuse to support it. However, the youth and representatives of the adult movement responded to the call of a new leadership: that of the Young Socialists supported and strengthened by the Socialist Labour League.

The Times of Monday, March 1 found the discipline of the Conference "almost frightening", and the Daily Telegraph found it "alarming." And well they might. The young workers who attended the Young Socialist Conference were probably, some of them, the same ones whose anger and frustration at living and working conditions in capitalist Britain overflowed in the riots at Clacton and Margate last year. They were the youth who struggle to buy motor bikes on Hire Purchase -- and curse the Labour Government for driving up the interest rates. They are the ones the police hound about the housing projects, who have no place to go and no money to spend if they did. They are the apprentices whose basic wage is 2/19/6 (7 or 8