

They merely serve to confuse an issue which should be kept clear, and to delay a process which has every need of being accelerated.

Fortunately for the revolution and for the fate of humanity, world history is not determined by sheep, nor in times such as the present can the sheep continue long in their sheepishness. In the great majority of cases--and particularly among the workers--this sheepishness is only a superficial adaptation to the capitalist environment and will be quickly thrown off under the pressure of capitalist collapse. These working-class "sheep" will then undergo a metamorphosis no less remarkable than those recorded in fable, and will come forth as heroes; not the sham heroes of capitalist wars of destruction, but the true heroes of the communist revolution of creation and redemption, in which humanity sloughs the brute and at last comes into its birth-right.

And in the final result, it is only the workers who really count; not the timid, respectable philistines who try to excuse their own cowardice on the ground of the workers' alleged backwardness, for which the philistines and their idolized leaders are largely responsible. These petty-bourgeois politicians who never advance beyond the stage of voting, and many of whom regard even that as an act of rare courage, are best characterized by Engels in "Revolution and Counter-Revolution", where, speaking of the small trading class, he says that it "never felt more comfortable than the day after a decisive defeat, when everything being lost, it had at least the consolation to know that somehow or other the matter was settled".

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INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

CORRESPONDENCE

For Theory and Discussion

Contents:

On The War Question

Trade Unionism

**Problems of the
New Labor Movement**

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INTERNATIONAL

COUNCIL

CORRESPONDENCE

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By the Groups of Council Communists of America

The period of progressive capitalist development is historically closed. The decline period of capital, a permanent condition of crisis, compels to ever greater convulsions of economy, to new imperialistic and military conflicts, to ever increasing unemployment and to general and absolute impoverishment of the workers. Thus is given the objective situation for the communist revolution in the capitalist countries. For the working class, there is only the revolutionary way out, which leads to the communist society. No one can deprive the workers of this task, which must be carried out by the class itself.

The publishers of Council Correspondence see in the acting self-initiative of the workers and in the growth of their self-consciousness the essential advance of the labor movement. We therefore combat the leadership policy of the old labor movement, and call upon the workers to take their fate in their own hands, to set aside the capitalist mode of production and themselves to administer and direct production and distribution in accordance with social rules having universal validity. As a fighting slogan and statement of goal we propose:

All power to the workers' councils! The means of production in the hands of the Workers!

Notes on the War Question

The problem of war, which has long been the object of so much discussion, has become a concrete question of the day thru the proceedings in Ethiopia. The enormous significance of this war lies in the fact that it illuminates as with a flash of lightning the general imperialistic rivalries and points to the inevitability of a new world slaughter. No thinking person seriously believes today that the war for the redistribution of the shares of profit can long be deferred any more, and the various nations are consciously making ready for this conflict. What the bourgeoisie and the various capitalist groups of interests have to say or conceal as to the war situation, we learn from their press; what they are doing in order that the war shall find them prepared is indicated by their arming manoeuvres and their "diplomacy".

The only thing that interests us here is the position to be taken on the war question by the revolutionary workers. First, in case the african war remains localized or is brought to an end thru imperialistic understandings before the world war breaks out; and secondly, what their position shall be in case the african adventure should presently develop into a new world war. The criterion for the position taken by us are the

real, international class interests of the proletariat. We have no desire either to defend the feudalistic regime in Abyssinia nor to justify fascist Italy nor to identify ourselves with the imperialistic interests of England; nor to confine ourselves, for lack of anything else to say, to the problems of the class struggle in the United States; nor thru the "maintenance of world peace" to preserve state-capitalist Russia from convulsion; nor to take up with the alliance policy of France against Germany (or the other way 'round). Our standpoint poses only the one question: what must, can and will the working class do?

The war--whether the one in Africa or the coming world war--has no other immediate significance for the workers than that a part of them will be killed off in the most revolting manner and that as a class, insofar as they are not slaughtered, they will be immeasurably impoverished. War, bringing death and misery to the workers, cannot from the working-class standpoint be bade welcome. But the preponderant working masses have today no class standpoint of their own; they are under the sway of the bourgeois ideology and follow the movements of their masters, willingly or unwillingly ready to suffer and die for them.

Our standpoint is not that of the working masses, but of a small part of their more or less class-conscious elements. We don't, however, damn the working class because of the circumstance that it is again making ready on an international scale to go under in millions for Capital. We realize that the ideas of a time are always those of the ruling class, and we know the objective as well as the subjective grounds which for the moment repress the revolutionary nature of the proletariat and which cause it to continue waging war for Capital, just as it also works for Capital.

The causes of the revolutionary unripeness of the proletariat shall not concern us at this place; we make these statements merely in order to draw the conclusion that the international working class will not in the near future thru revolutionary overturns put an end to capitalism and its wars. In this case there remains to the proletariat nothing other than to go along with capitalist policy; it has to decide for this or that capitalist group of interests and to fight for it.

What the proletariat would have to do in its own interest--that is, prevent the war--is possible only thru the revolutionary setting aside of capitalism. Still, the improbability of a revolution prior to the coming war makes the war certain already; and if the proletariat takes part in the war, it will do so not with a special

ideology, but that of its bourgeoisie. In such circumstances, the great mass of the workers will no doubt, just like the bourgeoisie, line up against revolutionists, and for these latter there will be for a time no other working possibility than such as exists under the present-day German fascism: the training and most careful selection of the revolutionists themselves, cautious increase of their numbers, and the endeavor to bring them alive thru the "dead time" (from the revolutionary standpoint), until the war has exhausted itself and has created the subjective ripeness for revolution. For if capitalist production has a revolutionizing character, so also has its destructive phase. If, in the course of its development, Capital shapes the greatest productive force, the proletariat, which is compelled to shatter the capitalist relations in order to consummate itself, --so in war it shapes, under the present conditions, a situation which, seen from any point of view, can only issue in the proletarian revolution.

While the last war had led almost to the door of the world revolution, this door will no doubt be opened by the new world war. For just as Capital is incapable of controlling production, which turns against it, so it is equally incapable of keeping destruction in forms and paths which offer the possibility of any desired diversion into "normal" situations. The magnitude and virulence of the coming war preclude its mastering by way of Capital. As in crisis, so also in war, Capitalism swims helpless in a sea of troubles; which is merely another confirmation of the fact that it is historically surpassed.

From the revolutionary point of view, war accelerates the advent of a truly revolutionary situation, and all forces will have to be properly directed to this factor. In unrevolutionary times, one need not, because of some silly idealistic fancies or other, lavish himself to no purpose, but will adjust his tactic and his will to the final struggle, which will be found in the wake of the war.

Capital pursues no social goals; there is today no "social will", but only particular strivings and groups of interests. Capital develops thru the sharpening of the conflicts of interests. If the number of these conflicts diminishes thru concentration, they become correspondingly harsher and more disintegrating. The more the conditions for a systematic social direction of economy from the technical and organizational standpoint are evolved, the more this possibility is precluded by reason of the persisting economic relations of present-day society. If economy cannot be planfully

organized even within the framework of a single nation, nor any peacefully regulated distribution of the shares of profit introduced, such a thing is still more thoroughly precluded on the international field. Necessary reorganizations, forced by reason of the sharpening contradiction between increasing productive forces and the persisting profit order (so as not to abolish the latter) can be brought about only by way of violence. If capital's concentration process and the crisis are means to the "extra-human" reorganization of profit economy--a reorganization determined by commodity fetishism--war likewise has no other significance. A capitalist war is not, however, always the same capitalist war. If the capitalist problem is one of creating additional surplus value, then a war which increases the profitability of capital may mean a way out of the capitalist difficulties and furnish the impulse for an accelerated advance. The war would here be a means of hastening the accumulation and would be followed not by revolutionary uprising but possibly by a general upswing. The fact that war always enriches only a few and impoverishes the mass under all circumstances is not the particular feature of war but the general tendency of the capitalist development. War itself does not create but destroys profit. It may, however, lead to the opening of new sources of profit which not only make up for the temporary loss but convert it into gain. War in this case is an accelerator for an otherwise slower movement. If war can accelerate accumulation, still on a higher stage of accumulation it is necessarily compelled to slow this accumulation down or, when it has come to a standstill, make its revival still more difficult. If the accelerated accumulation leads to over-accumulation and thereby to its arrest, it leads also to a situation in which the war must become a hindrance to further accumulation; a situation in which the war, instead of revealing new sources of profit, can continue to be conducted only for the sake of reorganizing the distribution of the profit internationally won and internationally determined. It is then a question not of increasing the profit and hence of overcoming the crisis, but of the altered distribution of the profit, in which connection the expenses of this process of distribution, the war costs, have to be set down as a pure loss by which the difficulties of capital are made more difficult.

The concentration of capital is, from the capitalist standpoint, progressive only in case there is a simultaneous growth of capital. Concentration without growth is only accelerated increase of the capitalist contradictions and difficulties. The character of the present crisis, as we have pointed it out (Council Correspondence, Vol 1, #2,) is not such as to permit of seeing in the coming world war a means of overcoming crisis.

The war can only deepen the crisis to a point at which the proletarian revolution must be released. But even though the war cannot be regarded as a means of overcoming the crisis, still there is capitalistically no possibility of preventing the war. If the profits can no longer be increased to conform to the further needs of accumulation, there remains to capital no other activity than the sharpened competitive struggle for the diminished or stagnating profit mass. The longer the crisis lasts, the more closely the war approaches. Though war most probably means the beginning of the capitalist end, still at the same time it is the only way out for capital, which can live only so long as it destroys. The paradoxical nature of this situation rests on the capitalist contradiction between exchange value and use value, on the fact that capital has to exercise production and destruction at the same time in order to exist at all. This is illustrated also in the increasing wealth of society with simultaneously decreasing profits, in the starving of human beings in the midst of superfluous products, etc.

We have said that if the proletariat cannot conduct an independent policy and if it fails to do so, then it can only come forth as an appendage of the bourgeoisie, with the interests of which it is compelled to conform. The african conflict presents an example of this fact. The mass of the italian workers still stands on the side of Mussolini, as the mass of the german workers still stands behind Hitler (indifference amounts to supporting the bourgeoisie) and the mass of the english workers identifies itself with the interests of its bourgeoisie. Even the policy of the "official labor movement" is a mere reflection of capitalist necessities. The Second International has identified itself with the imperialist measures and plans of England against Italy. The policy of "sanctions", the support of the League of Nations, even the transport strike which has remained no more than a phrase, or the petition for the closing of the Suez Canal--whatever was recommended against the war promoters on the part of the labor movement were recommendations in the interest of english imperialism. And if the Second International came out for english imperialism, so in turn english imperialism has come out for the labor movement in its struggle against "Fascism", which it has attacked as an "inciter of wars". We live in a funny world. Both the Second International as well as english imperialism, naturally want to maintain peace, which maintains the privileges of english imperialism, but the programs selected to this end are practically declarations of war. The Second International is for the english "peace" and hence for the english war.

The french reformists were more cautious in their demands for sanctions; the interests of the English are not identical with those of France. France's support of the english policy is an involuntary one. The policy of the Second International with regard to the war situation is a repetition of its position during the previous war: it is driving the masses to the shambles in the interest of the bourgeoisie.

The position of the Third International, identical with Russia's attitude on the war, is outwardly a silly cry for peace. On the african situation, it scarcely ventures to take a position. Radek writes in the "Rundschau" (#57): "Thruout the world the working people are following this war, and wish for the abyssinian masses not only that they will not come under any colonial yoke, but also that in this great historical test they will rend asunder the chains of feudalism and of slavery at home". But even this pious wish of the Third International in the interest of abyssinian independence came rather late, since Russia, like France, has no desire to offend Italy if such can in any way be avoided. It was not until her french ally, considering that the time for the world war has not yet come, made half-way concessions to England that Russia also found herself in a position where it became advisable to emit a few weak-kneed protests against Italy's aggressions, without, however, for that reason imposing any restrictions on the furnishing of Italy with raw materials necessary for war purposes.

If, in the opinion of the Third International, the workers should merely "follow" the war and in their hearts wish the Abyssinians luck, this is proof for the Trotskyists that Stalin has once more betrayed Leninism, for Lenin was of course for the unconditional support of all national movements and suppressed peoples. So then the "uncorrupted Leninists" write in "The New International" (Oct. 1935), without realizing how ridiculous they make themselves: "The position of neutrality of the international revolutionary proletariat we dismiss with a wave of the hand: if it is true that the revolutionary proletariat is for the defeat of Italy, when it is not neutral, then it is for the victory of Ethiopia. If it desires the victory of Ethiopia, then it must help to produce it. This means that it does not remain "neutral", but that it actively intervenes for Ethiopia." According to this conception, the most consistent revolutionists would be those who should join Haile Selassie's army and fight for him. Since, however, the trip to Africa costs money, one must after all confine himself to a few phrases which hurt nobody. Here are the concrete demands of the 200-percent Leninists: "Prevention of troop transports and of arms and munitions

supplies for Italy; support for arm supplies to Ethiopia: unambiguous, loud, fearless propaganda for the justness of the war from the ethiopian standpoint," etc. It never occurs to these people that the whole question of the "neutrality" of the proletariat, so hotly rejected, is no question at all. Either the proletariat fights with its bourgeoisie the war of the bourgeoisie, or else it makes revolution. These are the only two possibilities, and the possibility of a "neutral" attitude on the part of the proletariat does not exist. And so these people are merely tilting at their own fancies. Like parrots, they repeat leninist phrases which were revealed as humbug even during the last war. In the present-day imperialistic milieu there are no longer any national wars of liberation. Not much was lacking during the last war and Ethiopia would have gone in as a matter of self-interest. She was quite ready to take part in the imperialistic affray in order to profit by it. The feudal condition of the country does not preclude becoming involved in imperialistic policy. Only the lack of inner unity prevented at that time the participation of Ethiopia in the imperialist world war, as it today makes a struggle for "national liberation" or "independence" a silly phrase. Ethiopia is by no means a unified formation which takes up arms for its national independence, but a country disrupted by struggles of groups and interests; certain parts of which are ready to make common cause with Italy, while other parts prefer to continue exploiting their slaves by the grace of England. Within Ethiopia there are "suppressed nations" which line up against Haile Selassie just as Selassie does against Italy. So why not go still farther and carry the right of self-determination to Ethiopia itself, sabotage the ethiopian army and arm the suppressed tribes? Regardless of how zealously one may come out for the independence of Ethiopia, this "leninist principle" would always remain identical with support of the imperialist interests of England. It is about time that this silliest point of Leninism be thrown overboard, and one learns to realize that in the international field there are only two alternatives left today: either imperialist policy or -- working-class policy.

The abyssinian conflict has so far remained localized because the fronts for the coming world war are not yet drawn clearly enough. We see no use in considering here the question of when and with what combinations of powers the next war will occur and which of these combinations will have the best prospects. There is no imperialist country which has like-directed and unequivocal imperialistic interests; if only with the development of capital export, new oppositions of interests have taken form both on the international and the national planes, oppositions by which country and world

are divided into groups, some of which gain by peace and others of which profit from war. German fascism is actually being directed also against Capital, that is, against capitalist circles which are unable to identify themselves completely with the interests of the german imperialists. German as well as italian fascism have anticipated what had to wait until after the outbreak of the last war to be created; the coordinating war economy which passed for dictatorial subordination of all separate capitalist interests under the strongest imperialist interests, and which Lenin celebrated as state capitalism and the presupposition for socialism. Fascism is thus not merely an expression of the monopolistic concentration of economic policy, of the complete subordination of the workers under the profit needs of capital, but also a war measure for the new imperialistic conflicts. The objective unripeness of the war situation was illustrated in the japanese policy with regard to China, a policy which met with no real opposition among the other interested powers. The re-arming of Germany, the tearing up of the Versailles treaty, showed once more that a new world war requires first a reorientation of the various imperialisms. The isolation of the war in Africa merely points to the fact that this regrouping of imperialist interests is not yet completed. The war in Africa has so far given a new impetus only to diplomacy, the process of clarification, and only in this sense is it tied up with the coming world war.

The restraint on the part of England is to be understood only as preparation for war, just as the "neutrality" of Germany is identical with her re-arming and the vacillation of France is to be explained by the military unreadiness of Germany. A great number of surprises are still possible before the world war breaks out. It cannot be foreseen as yet what groups of powers will stand opposed to other groups. The one thing that is clear is that rivalries of great magnitude, such as the one between England and the United States, will help in determining those of the other countries, and that the smaller rivalries can work themselves out only within the framework of the large ones. If japanese imperialism functions almost exclusively on the basis of the english-american opposition, so the european alliance policy is likewise adjusted to that opposition. In whatever particular manner the powers may line up (we shall come back to this point in a special article), the process of formation may last a few years longer, but it may also be decided all of a sudden. The war is possible tomorrow, but it may equally well be delayed a few years longer. Looked at from the class standpoint, the proletariat must answer the war with the revolution. No other answer is possible. Just as it can only save itself thru the overthrow of capital, so it must endeavor even today

to assure its own life and must fight against capital for its material interests. Sharpening of the class struggle in peace and in war is ever the correct watchword. So far as concerns the present war in Africa, it presents no special problem. The proletariat can only come out for itself, by which it comes out for humanity. It cannot come out for the "independence of Ethiopia". The backward peoples fight, when they fight, for the development of their national capitalism, because nothing else is possible. It cannot be the task of the proletariat to fight for new as against old capitalist nations; it has to overthrow world capitalism. The proletariat has no word for Ethiopia, since Ethiopia still has no proletariat. But the proletariat has a word for Italy and for all other capitalist countries: the overthrow of world capitalism, and therewith the end of imperialism. With the end of world capitalism there is taken away at the same time the possibility of capitalizing the backward countries. However complicated the colonial question may appear within the framework of capitalism, the position of the proletariat has to be limited to the simplest formula: the safeguarding of the class interests of the proletariat, and nothing else.

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PLEASE NOTICE

The United Workers Party has found it advisable to drop the party name. In view of the fact that the U.W.P. was not a "party" in the traditional sense, the retention of the word has led to a lot of needless misunderstandings. The name "United Workers Party" had been selected at a time -- and then only as a temporary solution -- when the members of this organization were just beginning to find their present position. The new name, Groups of Council Communists, strikes us as a more accurate indication of our attitude, and all concerned are requested to note this change.

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How must the working class fight capitalism in order to win? This is the all important question facing the workers every day. What efficient means of action, what tactics can it use to conquer power and defeat the enemy? No science, no theory, could tell them exactly what to do. But spontaneously and instinctively, by feeling out, by sensing the possibilities, they found their ways of action. And as capitalism grew and conquered the earth and increased its power, the power of the workers also increased. New modes of action, wider and more efficient, came up beside the old ones. It is evident that the changing conditions, the forms of action, the tactics of the class struggle have to change also. Trade unionism is the primary form of labor movement in fixed capitalism. The isolated worker is powerless against the capitalistic employer. To overcome this handicap, the workers organized into unions. The union binds the workers together into common action, with the strike as their weapon. Then the balance of power is relatively equal, or is some times even heaviest on the side of the workers, so that the isolated small employer is weak against the mighty union. Hence in developed capitalism trade unions and employer's unions (Associations, Trusts, Corporations, etc.), stand as fighting powers against each other.

Trade unionism first came up in England, where industrial capitalism first developed. Afterward it spread to other countries, as a natural companion of capitalist industry. In the United States there were very special conditions. In the beginning, the abundance of free unoccupied land, open to settlers, made a shortage of workers in the towns and relatively high wages and good conditions. The American Federation of Labor became a power in the country, and generally was able to uphold a relatively high standard of living for the workers who were organized in unions.

It is clear that under such conditions the idea of overthrowing capitalism could not for a moment arise in the minds of the workers. Capitalism offered them a sufficient and fairly secure living. They did not feel themselves a separate class whose interests were hostile to the existing order; they were part of it; they were conscious of partaking in all the possibilities of an ascending capitalism in a new continent. There was room for millions of people, coming mostly from Europe. For these increasing millions of farmers, a rapidly increasing industry was necessary, where, with energy and good

luck, workmen could rise to free artisans, to small business men, even to rich capitalists. It is natural that here a true capitalist spirit prevailed in the working class.

The same was the case in England. Here it was due to England's monopoly of world commerce and big industry, to the lack of competitors on the foreign markets, and to the possessions of rich colonies, which brought enormous wealth to England. The capitalist class had no need to fight for its profits and could allow the workers a reasonable living. Of course, at the first, fighting was necessary to urge this truth upon them; but then they could allow unions and grant wages in exchange for industrial peace. So here the working class was also imbued with the capitalist spirit.

Now this is entirely in harmony with the innermost character of trade unionism. Trade unionism is an action of the workers, which does not go beyond the limit of capitalism. Its aim is not to replace capitalism by another form of production, but to secure good living conditions within capitalism. Its character is not revolutionary, but conservative.

Certainly, trade union action is class struggle. There is a class antagonism in capitalism--capitalists and workers have opposing interests. Not only on the question of conservation of capitalism, but also within capitalism itself, with regard to the division of the total product. The capitalists attempt to increase their profits, the surplus value, as much as possible, by cutting down wages and increasing the hours or the intensity of labor. On the other hand, the workers attempt to increase their wages and to shorten their hours of work. The price of his labor power is not a fixed quantity, though it must exceed a certain hunger minimum; and it is not paid by the capitalist of his own free will. Thus this antagonism becomes the object of a contest, the real class struggle. It is the task, the function of the trade unions to carry on this fight.

Trade unionism was the first training school in proletarian virtue, in solidarity as the spirit of organized fighting. It embodied the first form of proletarian organized power. In the early English and American trade unions this virtue often petrified and degenerated into a narrow craft-corporation, a true capitalistic state of mind. It was different, however, where the workers had to fight for their very existence, where the utmost efforts of their unions could hardly uphold their standard of living, where the full force of an energetic, fighting and expanding capitalism attacked them. There they had to learn the wisdom that only the revolution could de-

finitely save them.

So there comes a disparity between the working class and trade unionism. The working class has to look beyond capitalism. Trade unionism lives entirely within capitalism and cannot look beyond it. Trade unionism can only represent a part, a necessary but narrow part, in the class struggle. And it develops aspects which bring it into conflict with the greater aims of the working class.

With the growth of capitalism and big industry, the unions too must grow. They become big corporations with thousands of members, extending over the whole country, having sections in every town and every factory. Officials must be appointed: presidents, secretaries, treasurers, to conduct the affairs, to manage the finances, locally and centrally. They are the leaders, who negotiate with the capitalists and who by this practice have acquired a special skill. The president of a union is a big shot, as big as the capitalist employer himself, and he discusses with him on equal terms, the interests of his members. The officials are specialists in trade union work, which the members, entirely occupied by their factory work cannot judge or direct themselves.

So large a corporation as a union is not simply an assembly of single workers; it becomes an organized body, like a living organism, with its own policy, its own character, its own mentality, its own traditions, its own functions. It is a body with its own interests, which are separate from the interests of the working class. It has a will to live and to fight for its existence. If it should come to pass that unions were no longer necessary for the workers, then they would not simply disappear. Their funds, their members, and their officials, all these are realities that will not disappear at once, but continue their existence as elements of the organization.

The union officials, the labor leaders, are the bearers of the special union interests. Originally workmen from the shop, they acquire, by long practice at the head of the organization, a new social character. In each social group, once it is big enough to form a special group, the nature of its work, molds and determines its social character, its mode of thinking and acting. Their function is entirely different from that of the workers. They do not work in factories, they are not exploited by capitalists, their existence is not threatened continually by unemployment. They sit in offices, in fairly secure positions. They have to manage corporation affairs and to speak at workers meetings and discuss with employers. Of course, they have to stand for the workers, and to defend their interests and wishes against the capitalists. This is,

however, not very different from the position of the lawyer who, appointed secretary of an organization, will stand for its members and defend their interests to the full of his capacity.

However, there is a difference. Because many of the labor leaders came from the ranks of the workers, they have experienced for themselves what wage slavery and exploitation means. They feel as members of the working class and the proletarian spirit often acts as a strong tradition in them. But the new reality of their life continually tends to weaken this tradition. Economically they are not proletarians any more. They sit in conferences with the capitalists, bargaining over wages and hours, pitting interests against interests, just as the opposing interests of the capitalist corporations are weighted one against the other. They learn to understand the capitalist's position just as well as the worker's position; they have an eye for "the needs of industry"; they try to mediate. Personal exceptions occur, of course, but as a rule they cannot have that elementary class feeling of the workers, that does not understand and weigh capitalist interests over against their own, but will fight for their proper interests. Thus they get into conflict with the workers.

The labor leaders in advanced capitalism are numerous enough to form a special group or class with a special class character and interests. As representatives and leaders of the unions they embody the character and the interests of the unions. The unions are necessary elements of capitalism, so the leaders feel as necessary items, as most useful citizens in capitalist society. The capitalist functions of unions is to regulate class conflicts and to secure industrial peace. So labor leaders see it as their duty as citizens to work for industrial peace and mediate in conflicts. The test of the union lies entirely within capitalism; so labor leaders do not look beyond it. The instinct of self-preservation the will of the unions to live and to fight for existence, is embodied in the will of the labor leaders to fight for the existence of the unions. Their own existence is indissolubly connected with the existence of the unions. This is not meant in a petty sense, that they only think of their personal jobs when fighting for the unions. It means that primary necessities of life and social functions determine opinions. Their whole life is concentrated in the unions, only here have they a task. So the most necessary organ of society, the only source of security and power is to them the unions; hence it must be preserved and defended with all possible means. Even when the realities of capitalist society undermine this position, this capitalism does, when with its expansion class conflicts become sharper.

The concentration of capital in powerful concerns and their connection with big finance renders the position of the capitalist employers much stronger than the workers. Powerful industrial magnates are reigning as monarchs over large masses of workers, they keep them in absolute subjection and do not allow "their" men to go into unions. Now and then the heavily exploited wage slaves break out in revolt, in a big strike. They hope to enforce better terms, shorter hours, more human conditions, the right to organize. Union organizers come to aid them. But then the capitalist masters use their social and political power. The strikers are driven from their homes; they are shot by militia or hired thugs; their spokesmen are railroaded into jail; their relief actions are prohibited by court injunctions. The capitalist press denounces their cause as disorder, murder and revolution; public opinion is aroused against them. Then, after months of standing firm and of heroic suffering, exhausted by misery and disappointment, unable to impress the capitalist steel structure, they have to submit and to postpone their claims to more opportune times.

In the trades where unions exist as mighty organizations, their position is weakened by this same concentration of capital. The large funds they had collected for strike support are insignificant in comparison to the money power of their adversaries. A couple of lock-outs may completely drain them. No matter how hard the capitalist employer presses upon the worker by cutting wages and intensifying their hours of labor, the union cannot wage a fight. When tariffs have to be renewed, the union feels itself the weaker party. It has to accept the bad terms the capitalists offer; no skill in bargaining avails. But now the trouble with the rank and file members begins. The men want to fight; it will not submit before they have fought; and they have not much to lose by fighting. The leaders, however, have much to lose - the financial power of the unions, perhaps its existence. They try to avoid the fight, which they consider hopeless. They have to convince the men that it is better to come to terms. So, in the final analysis, they must act as spokesmen of the employers to force the capitalists' terms upon the workers. It is even worse when the workers insist on fighting, in opposition to the decision of the unions. Then the union's power must be used as a weapon to subdue the workers.

So the labor leader has become the slave of his capitalistic task of securing the industrial peace - now at the cost of the workers, though he meant to serve them as best he could. He cannot look beyond capitalism, and within the horizon of capitalism with a capitalist outlook, he is right when he thinks that fighting is of no use. The

criticism can only mean that trade unionism stands here at the limit of its power.

Is there another way out then? Could the workers win anything by fighting? Probably they will lose the immediate issue of the fight; but they will gain something else. By not submitting without having fought, they rouse the spirit of revolt against capitalism. They proclaim a new issue. But here the whole working class must join in. To the whole class, to all their fellow workers, they must show that in capitalism there is no future for them, and that only by fighting, not as a trade union, but as a class unity, they can win. This means the beginning of a revolutionary struggle. And when their fellow workers understand this lesson, when simultaneous strikes break out in other trades, when a wave of rebellion goes over the country, then in the arrogant hearts of the capitalists there may appear some doubt as to their omnipotence and some willingness to make concessions.

The trade union leader does not understand this point of view, because trade unionism cannot reach beyond capitalism. He opposes this kind of fight. Fighting capitalism in this way, means at the same time rebellion against the trade unions. The labor leader stands beside the capitalist in their common fear for the workers rebellion.

When the trade unions fought against the capitalist class for better working conditions, the capitalist class hated them, but it had not the power to completely destroy them. If the trade unions would try to raise all the forces of the working class in their fight, the capitalist class would persecute them with all its means. They may see their actions repressed as rebellion, their offices destroyed by militia, their leaders thrown in jail and fined, their funds confiscated. On the other hand, if they keep their members from fighting, the capitalist class may consider them as valuable institutions, to be preserved and protected; and their leaders as deserving citizens. So the trade unions find themselves between the devil and the deep sea; on the one side persecution, which is a tough thing to bear for people who meant to be peaceful citizens; on the other side, the rebellion of the members, which may undermine the unions. The capitalist class, if it is wise, will recognize that a bit of sham fighting must be allowed to uphold the influence of the labor leaders over the members.

The conflict arising here are not anyone's fault; they are an inevitable consequence of capitalistic development. Capitalism exists, but it is at the same time on the way to perdition. It must be fought as a living thing, and at the same time, as a transitory thing. The workers must wage a steady fight for wages and working

conditions, while at the same time communistic ideas, more or less clear and conscious, awaken in their minds. They cling to the unions, feeling that these are still necessary, trying now and then to transform them into better fighting institutions. But the spirit of trade unionism, which is in its pure form a capitalist spirit, is not in the workers. The divergence between these two tendencies in capitalism and in the class struggle appears now as a rift between the trade union spirit, mainly embodied in their leaders, and the growing revolutionary feeling of the members. This rift becomes apparent in the opposite position they take in various important social and political questions/

Trade unionism is bound to capitalism; it has its best chances to obtain good wages when capitalism flourishes. So in times of depression it must hope that prosperity will be restored, and it must try to further it. To the workers as a class, the prosperity of capitalism is not at all important. When it is weakened by crisis or depressions, they have the best chance to attack it, to strengthen the forces of the revolution and to take the first steps toward freedom.

Capitalism extends its dominion over foreign continents, seizing their natural treasures in order to make big profits. It conquers colonies, subjugates the primitive population and exploits them, often with horrible cruelties. The working class denounces colonial exploitation and opposes it, but trade unionism often supports colonial politics as a way to capitalist prosperity.

With the enormous increase of capital in modern times, colonies and foreign countries are being used as places in which to invest large sums of capital. They become valuable possessions as markets for big industry and as producers of raw materials. A race for getting colonies, a fierce conflict of interests over the dividing of the world arises between the great capitalist states. In these politics of imperialism the middle classes are whirled along in a common exultation of national greatness. Then the trade unions side with the master class, because they consider the prosperity of their own national capitalism to be dependent on its success in the imperialist struggle. For the working class, imperialism means increasing power and brutality of their exploiters.

These conflicts of interests between the national capitalisms explodes into wars. World war is the crowning of the policy of imperialism. For the workers, war is not only the destroying of all their feelings of international brotherhood, it also means the most violent exploitation of their class for capitalist profit. The working class, as the most numerous and the most oppres-

sed class of society, has to bear all the horrors of war. The workers have to give not only their labor power, but also their health and their lives.

Trade unionism, however, in war must stand upon the side of the capitalist. Its interests are bound up with national capitalism, the victory of which it must wish with all its heart. Hence it assists in arousing strong national feelings and national hatred. It helps the capitalist class to drive the workers into war and to beat down all opposition.

Trade unionism abhors communism. Communism takes away the very basis of its existence. In communism, in the absence of capitalist employers, there is no room for the trade union and labor leaders. It is true that in countries with a strong socialist movement, where the bulk of the workers are socialists, the labor leaders must be socialists too, by origin as well as by environment. But then they are right-wing-socialists; and their socialism is restricted to the idea of a commonwealth, where instead of greedy capitalists, honest labor leaders will manage industrial production.

Trade unionism hates revolution. Revolution upsets all the ordinary relations between capitalists and workers. In its violent clashings, all those careful tariff regulations are swept away; in the strife of its gigantic forces the modest skill of the bargaining labor leaders loses its value. With all its power, trade unionism opposes the ideas of revolution and communism.

This opposition is not without significance. Trade unionism is a power in itself. It has considerable funds at its disposal, as material element of power. It has its spiritual influence, upheld and propagated by its periodical papers as mental element of power. It is a power in the hands of the leaders, who make use of it wherever the special interests of trade unions come into conflict with the revolutionary interests of the working class. Trade unionism, though built up by the workers and consisting of workers, has turned into a power over and above workers. Just as government is a power over and above the people.

The forms of trade unionism are different for different countries, owing to the different forms of development in capitalism. Nor do they always remain the same in every country. When they seem to be slowly dying away, the fighting spirit of the workers sometimes is able to transform them, or to build up new types of unionism. Thus in England, in the years 1880-90, the "new unionism" sprang up from the masses of poor dockers and the other badly paid, unskilled workers, bringing a new

spirit into the old craft unions. It is a consequence of capitalist development, that in founding new industries and in replacing skilled labor by machine power, it accumulates large bodies of unskilled workers, living in the worst of conditions. Forced at last into a wave of rebellion, into big strikes, they find the way to unity and class consciousness. They mould unionism into a new form, adapted to a more highly developed capitalism. Of course, when afterwards capitalism grows to still mightier forms, the new unionism cannot escape the fate of all unionism, and then it produces the same inner contradictions.

The most notable form sprang up in America, in the "Industrial Workers of the World." The I. W. W. originated from two forms of capitalist expansion. In the enormous forests and plains of the West, capitalism reaped the natural riches by Wild West methods of fierce and brutal exploitation; and the worker-adventurers responded with as wild and jealous a defense. And in the Eastern States new industries were founded upon the exploitation of millions of poor immigrants, coming from countries with a low standard of living and now subjected to sweatshop labor or other most miserable working conditions.

Against the narrow craft spirit of the old unionism, of the A.F. of L., which divided the workers of one industrial plant into a number of separate unions, the I.W.W. put the principle: all workers of one factory as comrades against one master, must form one union, to act as a strong unity against the employer. Against the multitude of often jealous and bickering trade unions, the I.W.W. set up the slogan: one big union for all the workers. The fight of one group is the cause of all. Solidarity extends over the entire class. Contrary to the haughty disdain of the well-paid old American skilled labor towards the unorganized immigrants, it was these worst paid proletarians that the I.W.W. led into the fight. They were too poor to pay high fees and build up ordinary trade unions. But when they broke out and revolted in big strikes, it was the I.W.W. who taught them how to fight; who raised relief funds all over the country; and who defended their cause in its papers and before the courts. By a glorious series of big battles it infused the spirit of organization and self-reliance into the hearts of these masses. Contrary to the trust in the big funds of the old unions, the Industrial Workers put their confidence in the living solidarity and the force of endurance, upheld by a burning enthusiasm. Instead of the heavy stone-masoned buildings of the old unions, they represented the flexible construction, with a fluctuating membership, contracting in time of peace, swelling and growing in the fight itself. Contrary to the conservative capitalist spirit of trade unionism, the Industrial Workers were anti-capital-

ist and stood for Revolution. Therefore they were persecuted with intense hatred by the whole capitalist world. They were thrown into jail and tortured on false accusations; a new crime was even invented on their behalf: that of "criminal syndicalism".

Industrial unionism alone as a method of fighting the capitalist class is not sufficient to overthrow capitalist society and to conquer the world for the working class. It fights the capitalists as employers on the economic field of production, but it has not the means to overthrow their political stronghold, the state power. Nevertheless, the I.W.W. so far has been the most revolutionary organization in America. More than any other it has contributed to rouse class consciousness and insight, solidarity and unity in the working class, to turn its eyes toward communism, and to prepare its fighting power.

The lesson of all these fights is that against big capitalism, trade unionism cannot win. And if at times it wins, such victories give only temporary relief. And yet, these fights are necessary and must be fought. To the bitter end? - no, to the better end.

The reason is obvious. An isolated group of workers against an isolated capitalist employer, might make equal parties. But an isolated group of workers against an employer, backed by the whole capitalist class, is powerless. And such is the case here: the state power, the money power of capitalism, public opinion of the middle class, excited by the capitalist press, all attack the group of fighting workers.

But does the working class back the strikers? The millions of other workers do not consider this fight as their own cause. Certainly they sympathize, and often collect money for the strikers, and this may give some relief, provided its distribution is not forbidden by a judge's injunction. But this easy-going sympathy leaves the real fight to the striking group alone. The millions stand aloof, passive. So the fight cannot be won (except in some special cases, when the capitalists, for business reasons, prefer to grant concessions), because the working class does not fight as one undivided unit.

The matter will be different, of course, when the mass of the workers really consider such a contest as directly concerning them; when they find that their own future is at stake. If they go into the fight themselves and extend the strike to other factories, to ever more branches of industry. Then the state power, the capitalist power, has to be divided and cannot be used entirely against the separate group of workers. It has to face the

collective power of the working class.

Extension of the strike, ever more widely, up to a general strike in the end, has often been advised as a means to avert a defeat. But to be sure, this is not to be taken as a truly expedient pattern, accidentally hit upon, and ensuring victory. If such were the case, trade unions certainly would have made of it repeatedly as regular tactics. It cannot be proclaimed at will by union leaders, as a simple tactical measure. It must come forth from the deepest feelings of the masses, as the expression of their spontaneous initiative; and this is aroused only when the issue of the fight is or grows larger than a simple wage contest of one group. Only then the workers will put all their force, their enthusiasm, their solidarity, their power of endurance into it.

And all these forces they will need. For capitalism also will bring into the field stronger forces than before. It may have been defeated and taken by surprise by the unexpected exhibition of proletarian force and thus have made concessions. But then afterwards, it will gather new forces out of the deepest roots of its power and proceed to win back its position. So the victory of the workers is neither lasting nor certain. There is no clear and open road to victory; the road itself must be hewn and built through the capitalist jungle at the cost of immense efforts.

But even so, it will mean great progress. A wave of solidarity has gone through the masses, they have felt the immense power of class unity, their self-confidence is raised, they have shaken off the narrow group egotism. Through their own deeds they have acquired new wisdom: what capitalism means and how they stand as a class against the capitalist class. They have seen a glimpse of their way to freedom.

Thus the narrow field of trade union struggle widens into the broad field of class struggle. But now the workers themselves must change. They have to take a wider view of the world. From their trade, from their work within the factory walls, their mind must widen to encompass society at large. Their spirit must rise above the petty things around them. They have to face the state; they enter the realms of politics. The problems of revolution must be dealt with.

J. H.

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PROBLEMS OF THE NEW
LABOR MOVEMENT

In August 1935 the Council Correspondence published an article by our dutch comrades, dealing with the rise of a new labor movement and which was to serve as the basis of a discussion for the reorientation of the working class. The September number of the C.C. contained a series of theses which had been adopted by an international conference of council-communist groups held in Brussels. The October number of the C.C. brought out some critical remarks on the first-mentioned article, The Rise of a New Labor Movement, which were written by H.W., a member of a council-communist organization whose standpoint is very similar to ours. Finally, we published in the C.C. a reply of the dutch comrades to the Brussels theses. A large number of letters have reached us, dealing either with the Brussels conference or with H.W.'s disquisitions, as well as with the article of the dutch group. The points of view set forth in the correspondence were those which had already been expressed in the earlier contributions to the discussion as published in the C.C.; their publication could therefore be dispensed with. The Groups of Council Communists of America have stated in the last number of the C.C. that they could not be satisfied with the discussion to date, and are now presenting their own ideas on the subject, tho in regrettably condensed form. This is not, however, the end of the discussion; in further numbers of this periodical we shall again take up these questions in more detailed as well as more definite manner.

I

The work of the dutch group on "The Rise of a New Labor Movement" confines itself to a compendium of the general and essential principles of the council-communist movement. If one regards it as nothing more than this, it can no doubt be accepted with slight reservations. Still, one is then compelled at the same time to work out or convert the general principles into serviceable and concrete directives, in which connection the general principles must undergo more or less important modifications if they are not to be regarded as a utopian abstraction and lose all value.

We too are convinced that the old labor movement is objectively surpassed, however much the heads of a lot of workers may still be afflicted by its ideologies. Since there is no possibility of realizing its ideas, it is only a question of time until the old labor move-

Due to an error pages 22-26 got mixed up; in reading, please follow strictly page numbers.

of organization. During the spontaneous uprisings, committees of action (councils) take form, since the forming of anything else is out of the question; and these represent the organization of any struggle whatsoever, and their fate depends on the development of this struggle. The extension of the struggle is at the same time the unfolding and centralizing of the council organization. A defeat may destroy it, until a new outbreak again brings it into existence. The necessarily small labor groups under the conditions of illegality can at most exercise influence upon these spontaneous organizations, never determine or directly lead them. Their activity has to be carried on within the councils as they arise, and not as a special organization by the side of these latter. Under the conditions of the dictatorship of Capital they can only exist at all as a special organization when they are so small that they are incapable of becoming the decisive factor of the revolution. They form, as a matter of fact, only the conscious element in the compulsory action of the masses. But even tho we decline to overrate the ideologically conscious element of the revolution, it has to be furthered. The greater the number of workers who know what is to be done, the better for the revolution; but their number will never be sufficient to direct the overturn all by themselves. The councils remain the determining factor. The more clearly these councils recognize their tasks, the more radically will the revolution be carried thru. The conscious element must work in the councils, and not attempt to impose their policies on them from the outside.

What holds for the revolution, holds also for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The workers have no more need of a special machinery of suppression than they have of a special political organization by the side of the councils. (The special political organization is, after all, only an indication of the unripeness of the revolutionary situation - an indication of the impossibility of the overthrow of capitalism.) The councils must alone have the economic and political instruments of power in their hands -- and in fact they have those instruments, provided that they do not voluntarily turn them over to a special body. The existence of two different centers of power can only lead to the elimination of one or the other. The councils organize the dictatorship, as later on they also organize production and distribution. They can not tolerate a special power beside themselves, for such a condition is a sure sign of their future impotence. The councils can only assert themselves and become the basis of the social organization when they can assert themselves as the exclusive instrument of power. "All power to the councils" is not

ment as a council movement is the yardstick with which the conscious application of the class forces can be measured". The idea that the workers' councils arise only in the revolution itself, we too reject. In any movement proceeding from the working class the main emphasis must be laid on the formation of workers' councils. The significance of a mass movement does not consist so much in the material successes which it attains, but in whether and to what extent it succeeds in applying the class forces thru its councils.

The labor movement which is consciously interested in the development of the movement of labor and which can be denoted as new we too regard as composed of those still very small groups "which see the essential part of the struggle for emancipation in the independent movement of the masses"; the goal of whose striving is not the power for themselves, but for the class, not party power but council power. H.W. too, in his critical remarks, shares our conception, and takes a different position for the first time in his treatment of the relation of the organized labor movement to the mass movements. Of course, it is only in case the arguments of the dutch group are to be regarded as a concrete analysis of the present-day situation -- which apparently is not the case -- that they are open to H.W.'s reproach of not being concrete. As a "broad perspective" capable of dispensing with more detailed treatment, that analysis has its validity.

Furthermore, to H.W., the exposition of the dutch group regarding the mass movement were rendered "obscure" for the reason that they are not concerned with bringing forth a new "organizational apparatus", but a new "vital principle". We too regard this substitution of a "vital principle" as very much out of order. One need not always seek for something with which to replace things which one has recognized as no longer serviceable. Things are not replaced; they disappear, and new ones take form. We agree with H.W. that "any class struggle and any mastery of society is impossible without suitable organization", and we see in this "vital principle" of the dutch group nothing more than new organizational forms. The councils are the organization of the revolution and that of the new society after their victory. Though prior to the revolution they may be possible only temporarily, take form and again disappear, and have no possibility of developing a permanent apparatus, still after the taking over of power as well as in the actual revolutionary process they become the machinery of social organization. Under the capitalist dictatorship, -- the ground of the proletarian revolution, -- the working class has no possibility of shaping for itself revolutionary, permanent forms

sense of the class movement; it is of practical importance only in the narrower sense of the relation of the working-class organizations to the class struggle. The revolutionary as well as the indifferent worked for Capital, the ones willingly, the others against their will. The ones carried on the struggle against Capital, the others went along with Capital. One group waited for wage increases, the other struck for them. Both these attitudes were possible only because wage increases were possible and necessary and were in conformity with the interests of Capitalism, however strongly resisted by the individual capitalist. Reformism, even when it was aggressive and denoted the attained stage of proletarian class struggle, had to move within a capitalism the end of which was beyond the range of vision -- except in theory, which must first become actuality in order to seize the masses. The indifferent workers merely sought to safeguard their advantages and interests in another and cheaper manner -- precisely by means of their indifference -- since they were still less in a position to see beyond the mighty capitalist system. The proletarian class itself is a product of Capital; it forms and grows with the growth of Capital, it is weak and becomes stronger; in the up and down of capitalist economy it is compelled to activity and made passive; it acts revolutionary and reactionary out of necessity. But in all situations it is constantly present "in itself" and endeavors to act "for itself". One would do better, instead of making use of these limited formulas, to investigate the grounds by which the working class in different situations is moved in one case to take a revolutionary stand and in another to remain completely passive. But the passivity also is a form of action and invalidates the formulation in question, which has to restrict itself to the comparatively meaningless ideological attitude of the workers in order to justify itself at all. In reality, the class is never "lifeless", tho it often lives on its inactivity. From the isolated standpoint of ideological maturity one may work with formulas, but such a procedure does not suffice for characterizing the whole class movement.

II

With the other sections of the article on the rise of a new labor movement we are, on the whole, in agreement, and we refrain from repeating the points there brought out, in which our own views are embraced. We are in accord with the dutch group when it states that the "movement of labor assumes in the workers' councils the form whereby it is in a position to master the social forces". And to us also "the growth of the mass move-

front, is fashioned by way of the capitalist conditions themselves.

In order to make clear the development of class consciousness, the dutch comrades adopted the formulation of the class "in itself" and the class "for itself", concepts such as had been employed by Marx and others. The use of such distinguishing methodological formulas for facilitating the understanding of many-sided problems does not, however, do away with the many-sidedness itself. And, for that matter, we read further: "Naturally, there is no complete and unbridgeable opposition between the class 'in itself' and the class 'for itself'; In reality, however, there is not even an incomplete opposition of this nature. The class is at any time both 'in itself' and 'for itself'; it merely expresses itself differently in different situations and at the different stages of its development. Its possibilities and necessities change, and thereby its tasks and its attitudes. From the viewpoint of proletarian consciousness in the sense of ideology, the class exists only 'in itself' when it renounces the representing of its specific class interests and apathetically follows Capital. The indifference of the working class with respect to its real necessities surely does not abolish it as a class. But it has no obviously revolutionary character; it exists apparently not yet for itself, but for Capital. To the dutch comrades, it then exists "like any lifeless thing, hence passively." "As a living, active being" it exists, as they see it, only when it "comes into motion and to the consciousness of itself". H.W. in his criticism of this viewpoint (C.C. Vol. I; # 12) points out correctly that it is false to denote the working class as a lifeless thing. "For the working class even today is a quite 'active' force in the social development ... This 'activity' has a quite determinate, even tho conservative, effect in capitalist reality. A revolutionary passive class is not a "lifeless thing"; tho it is true that its activity is, in the first place, relatively weak and, secondly, goes in a direction which does not consciously lead to communist struggle. Unconsciously, however, even a reformist policy in which class interests are represented contributes a certain social propulsion and drives things forward." If one conceives class-consciousness not only as ideology, but still more as the workers' acting initiative, born of necessity, then the class always exists 'in itself' and 'for itself' at the same time. It was only because 'enlightened' workers stood over against the indifferent masses that the old labor movement was able, of course, to identify the conscious part with the entire class. But this difference of ideology does not mean much in the broader

ment has disappeared from the mind as well, or until it has reached also its subjective end. The passing of the old labor movement as a tradition and as a tilting at wind-mills depends on so many different and yet interdependent factors that the point of time for it can not be definitely fixed. Our only consolation on this point is the certainty of the objective untenability of those ideas and impossibility of objective retrogression, as well as the tempo of capitalist decline, which of course is no less rapid than the capitalist upswing. The momentum attained by the capitalist movement as a result of the previous development precludes for the further development any long and relatively static periods.

We further share the view of the dutch comrades regarding the reasons of the present impotence of the labor movement and regarding its decline by reason of this impotence. The old labor movement is not only no match for the power of capital, but has itself become a part and expression of this capitalist power. The capitalist class must be opposed by the class front of the proletariat. The organized labor movement was neither interested in the forming of a genuine class front nor, even if it had been so, would have been capable of such a thing. It constantly championed group interests, and it was only to such conflicts that the movement was organizationally adapted. The end of the old labor movement was necessarily involved with the capital concentration in the decline of capitalism. The class struggle against the capitalist system, and in its most radical form, has thus become the only objective possibility.

Even tho the source of reformism - the capitalist upswing - was dried up, and the capitalist decline mirrored only the unavoidable end of the reformist movement, it was still possible to live for a time on reformist propaganda. The possibility of organization without the possibility of reform gave rise also to the neo-reformism of post-war time, until fascism came to look upon the existence of even the most incompetent working-class organizations as burdensome and dangerous, and set them aside. The indirect subordination of the workers to the interests of Capital by means of reformism has been followed by the direct subordination thru fascism. So that one may no doubt say with the dutch comrades that the organized labor movement as hitherto existing has found its historical end. It can not be formed anew. The thing with which we are concerned, in connection with the coming revolutionary conflicts, is the movement of labor. This movement of labor, which already represents the class

an empty phrase, but inexorable necessity. Any deviation from this principle is a step toward the emasculation of the councils and thereby to putting obstacles in the way of the communist struggle.

As to whether we shall succeed, --we are, of course, only a part of the working class, and without special interests, -- in putting our principle into practice in its pure form: that is a question by which the principle itself is not affected. One does not always attain the thing that he aims for. But because too many opposite forces work counter to the objectively possible goal -- forces which may succeed in turning the goal aside -- it is well for that very reason to hold unwaveringly to the maximal program. If by reason of the situation the councils are compelled to have resort to special measures not always in conformity with the final goal, which is not clear even to themselves, in order to exist at all, or if the councils fail to take proper account of the objective situation and fall back into a policy which must bring about their own end: that is regrettable, and will compel us also to flexibility and tactical manoeuvres which can not yet be foreseen. But for the very reason that these dangers have to be reckoned with, one is obliged, prior to their occurrence, and as long as possible, to stand all the more consistently for the maximal program and to fight for it. There are enough backward forces, and there is no need to help them to victory; the more concessions are made to them, the more backward they become. To use an expression of Liebknechts's, one must "strive for the impossible in order to make the possible possible." It is only when one renounces intrusion into the real struggle, because history goes other ways than one desires, that one has forfeited the name of revolutionist. What the dutch group has had to say on these questions is no doubt insufficient: how the class is capable of asserting itself, how it can fashion in councils the instrument of suppression which assures the council dictatorship, etc. ("We too must refrain from going farther into these questions at this place, but shall deal with them in special articles.") Of one thing, however, we are assured; namely, that the arguments advanced by H.7. are only stop-gap affairs which bring the solution of the problem not a single step forward. His own answer to the question which he proposes is, as a matter of fact, merely a rechristening of old things which he had already regarded as out of the way. His proposals are nothing but new names for the old party conceptions, and the considerations by which they are supported must then likewise fall back upon the old arguments of the previous labor movement. Once more a clear communist program is objected to on

the ground that, to be sure, it is fine and lovely in theory, but that practice compels to watering it. Once more the existence of the middle strata, the backwardness of the farmers, etc., must be made to bear the blame for one's own inconsistency, tho in reality it is precisely because of the backwardness and enmity of these strata that the full measure of revolutionary consistency and unambiguity must be maintained. These groups can not be hoodwinked by means of a shrewd policy; their activity can only be prevented and, if necessary, combatted by force. The more the amount of resistance, the more unambiguously must the revolutionary program be represented. The first concession compels to a series of concessions; in the end there will be nothing left of the original design. When, as will undoubtedly be the case, concessions are forced upon the revolutionary movement, that is bad enough; but to make of these possibly necessary concessions a matter of principle and set them down in a program is equivalent to drawing back from the attempt at radical solutions and is a relapse into the old leadership policy which claims to be able thru "shrewdness" to fashion history after its own desires.

H.W.'s political councils by the side of the economic ones (why separate, anyhow, what practically is quite inseparable ?) are a restoration of the previous party policy which asserted that the party dictatorship realizes that of the masses and is identical with the dictatorship of the class. On this point we reject H.W. absolutely. His warning to the effect that if we reject his position we thereby "leave the field to the other organizations which for the moment are still capable of action" does not move us, since we have no desire to compete with these organizations for following among and control over the masses. We do not wish to persuade the masses to follow us, but to promote their independent movement. We don't say: "Follow us and not the others". We say: "Follow no one, but only your own interests and necessities." These necessities are also ours, so that the framework of the council movement suffices us for our own activity. Until the councils arise, we are of course compelled to form in separate groups, but this defect can not be converted into a quality. We must disappear as a special organization as soon as the masses shape for themselves their organization in the councils. Our place is in the councils, not by the side of them.

No doubt the disquisition of the dutch comrades regarding the work groups and their relation to the mass movements have to be supplemented. The present formulation of theirs on this point often has a painfully

idealistic flavor. But this defect can be remedied, and in no case can one make concessions here to H.W.'s conception.

III

In addition to the questions discussed above, the Brussels theses (C.C.Vol.I;No.11) brought still others up for consideration: the questions of centralism and of state-capitalist tendencies. The question of centralism had already been touched upon by H.W. in his critical remarks, and the article on the new labor movement is as a matter of fact weakened owing to inadequate treatment of this problem. The practical demands of the Brussels theses for more thorough organization of the work groups and illegal formations to the end of safeguarding them and making them more effectual, for the establishment of international connections and better coordination, for the working out of programmatic directives with a view to clarification and orientation in the interest of a more unified and rational procedure—such demands are likewise represented by us in the fullest measure. The criticism directed at them by the dutch group (C.C.,Vol.II;No.1), and which takes the form of an objection to the centralization necessarily involved in this coordination, comes to us as a complete surprise. All that we have been able to gather from the Brussels theses on this point are the simplest practical and obvious steps for the solution of the tasks with which we are faced. The sceptical "Aha! a new Fifth or Sixth International" on the part of the dutch group strikes us as uncalled for and having reference to other matters not referred to, for the Brussels theses themselves do not justify such an objection. The independence of the work groups is not abolished by bringing them organizationally together; rather, without such organization any work group is sooner or later doomed to death. Independence and centralization are opposites, but nevertheless unavoidable ones, and the marxist doctrine of the unity of opposites should alone suffice to indicate the uselessness of the "for or against" argument. Practically, the dutch group also can not help doing what the Brussels theses propose, unless it should quite renounce any truly revolutionary work at all. Its fear that the following of the Brussels proposals would lead to a dictatorship of the central apparatus over the groups, thus restricting their independence, is the fear of life itself. One can not reject things merely because they involve dangers; one must work in the conditions such as they are and try to carry thru in them and in spite of them.

With the advancing monopolization of world capitalism,

the permanent crisis and the period of world wars, the national peculiarities in relation to the proletarian class struggle in the different countries vanish. The internationalizing of capital and the world-wide over-accumulation create in all capitalist countries the same objectively revolutionary conditions. In the various capitalist countries the tasks and goals of the workers are not essentially distinguishable. In the United States one has, as a matter of fact, to take the same stand as in England or Germany: the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of Communism. Even in the U.S.A., already the possibility of any extensive reformist activity is no longer present. The most far-going demand has here also become the most real one. Thus is given the material basis of a unified class-struggle program for all developed capitalist countries. This program, limited like any other, can contain only the more general directives of principle. The only influence which it can exercise upon the various groups is by giving them the assurance that forces everywhere are working in our direction. Practically, it can not do other than assist each individual group in its development. Under the present conditions, it is simply out of the question for a new International to develop as a copy of the previous ones. The two surpassed Internationals were, in all their aspects, bound up with the presence of democracy in several countries and thus with a relative stability of capitalist economy. Under the present economic conditions, even formal democracy is an impossibility, so that such structures as the previous Internationals also become impossible. It is for this reason that Trotsky's attempts to resolve a new International into existence strikes one as so silly. Nor are we either in a position to form an International which could exercise upon the groups the influence feared by the Dutch comrades. The question of the council international is not at all acute; the matter at issue is the making use of the possible, however limited, international cooperation of our groups. An International does not depend on the resolution to form it, nor is it prevented by an objection. The council-international can, in our opinion, only be the result of a new world-revolutionary wave, and as things stand today there is no probability of such a wave until after the on-coming new world war has run its course. Or else the international crisis would have to deepen so fast as to paralyze in almost inconceivable measure the capacity for action on the part of Capital; but such an eventuality is less likely than an early war.

We share with the authors of the Brussels theses the desire for better international cooperation to the full extent possible, and the organizational and technical

matters involved seem to us so obvious that we think they can be left to the correspondence of the different groups. What holds for better cooperation on the international scale, holds with still more force for the work groups in the different countries. If by reason of objective impossibilities the old labor movement can not arise anew, so also the dangers with which it is associated can not turn up in the new labor movement. No doubt the new labor movement will have its own dangers and unpleasantnesses, but they will not be those of the past one. Such an absolute statement of the demand for independence of the groups as has been presented by the Dutch comrades is not only unmarxist, but practically also impossible. In reality, they too can not help binding together the national and international work groups and thus giving rise to certain central functions. And practically, even if there had been such a desire on the part of the Brussels conference, it would still have been incapable of transferring to the new labor movement the centralism of the previous one. The thing that is needed is to make centralization possible, without thereby preventing the independent development of the groups; and this is not only needed, but anything else in this line is out of the question. Any central apparatus as well as the individual group is prevented in very large measure, by reason of the present situations, from forming permanent instruments of power and repeating the nauseous activity of the previous labor movement.

IV

In its reply to the Brussels theses, the Dutch group speaks of two different points of departure by which the conceptions in question are differentiated. It holds that the Brussels theses are based exclusively on the actual problems of the German illegal movement, while its own conception is based on the more far-reaching, general attitude to the problems of communism as they have received expression in the previous publications of the Dutch group. In the view of this group, the Brussels theses merely reflect the momentary German practice, which has been willfully elevated to a general theory.

Well, one can have a theory for the daily practical struggle, and one can have a theory which takes into consideration longer spaces of time and broader problems. One can also have a theory which embraces both these points of view. The union of the narrower theory of the Brussels theses with the broader one of the Dutch group would do away with the dispute as to which of the two should be given greater importance. The one does not

contradict the other, but is part of the other. Apparently, however, the disquisitions contained in the Brussels theses are not rated by the Dutch group as theory at all, but as practical work presented which speaks for itself and nothing else. And then an attempt is made to demonstrate that without theory no proper practice is possible, as if this were all that was needed to dispose of the Brussels theses. Practice appears to the Dutch group not as the necessary counterpart of theory, but as a second-rate factor completely dependent on theory. But, anyhow, this has nothing further to do with Marxian dialectic, whose doctrine of the unity of opposites shows up the problem of the priority of theory or practice as idle chatter. Theory and practice, consciousness and necessity, are inseparable. Things can be changed with false consciousness as well or as badly as with correct consciousness (always within the limits of the social necessities), but one must cease to be human in order to practice without consciousness, without theory. The degree in which theory conforms with the practical needs of the class determines its value for the class, and under certain circumstances a self-limiting theory may have more practical value than one which tries to embrace in itself more than the direct necessities. And the choice between these theories is not a voluntary, but a compulsory one. Any theory has to proceed from the actual environment, and the greater the extent to which the theory can be reduced to the direct necessities, the greater its direct effect. This direct effect conditions more than the quality of the theory; it conditions also the life of those who do the theorizing. The circumstance that the theses of the Brussels conference sprang from the straight-jacket outlook of German fascism does not diminish their value. The reproach of the Dutch group is based on the still persisting social-democratic conception of the development of human consciousness. Just as the Social Democracy rested its hopes for socialism on the development of the social-democratic ideology, so the Dutch comrades hold the communist revolution and communism as possible only when a preponderant mass of the workers have more or less clearly "comprehended" their tasks and possibilities. Here also, consciousness, conceived as ideology, makes history; man first thinks, then he comprehends and then he acts. But such a conception is in contradiction to the actual historical process, and the senselessness of the thing is shown day after day in the fact that the masses don't comprehend and nevertheless in the last instance act correctly. The revolution is not brought about consciously, if we have reference to a consciousness such as it is today generally understood. The great number of errors in relation to the connection between history and class-consciousness result from transferring the laws of the

growth of consciousness in the individual onto the class problems. (We shall soon deal with this question thoroughly.) Class consciousness, however, is something different and is subject to other laws than is the consciousness of the individual. With the neglect of this difference, the Dutch group has been deprived of the very possibility of coming nearer to the solution of the problem. The mass of workers--regardless of the extent to which its class-consciousness (as ideology) is developed--comes into situations which compel it to action. Once it has acted, the new situation arising thereby brings forth its own consequences. Whether they will or not, the workers are compelled to ever more radical steps, and each of these steps compels to the further pursuit of a goal which conceptually is not at all or but faintly recognized. The struggle for mere existence compels the workers to revolutionary actions, these actions compel to the proletarian dictatorship, the dictatorship to the construction of communism. Each separate stage of the struggle forces out of itself the next one, or the very first stage ends in defeat, which may involve the death of the strugglers. Even the capitalist economy is ideologically conditioned by commodity fetishism, and production and distribution governed by a social relation, still a progressive unfolding of capitalism was nevertheless and precisely for that reason possible. The same social relation in which the revolution has to be accomplished precludes a conscious procedure on the part of the working masses, without for that reason precluding the revolution itself. If capitalism lives and develops "blindly", so also the revolution against capitalism can only come about in the same way. Any other conception not only violates historical materialism; it is in contradiction to all historical facts. To reckon upon a point of time at which the masses know in advance exactly what they have to do in an insurrection is nonsense. It is only with the success of their compulsory action that the possibility is formed for intellectually comprehending the new situation. The compulsion to action must be stronger than the influence of the capitalist ideology in order to make the latter ineffectual. There is by no means any contradiction involved in saying that the workers begin the revolution contrary to their own conviction. And it is only the course and result of the revolution by which the convictions are changed and the consciousness adapted to the new reality. (Attempts have been made to solve this problem of consciousness by means of Sorelian mysticism and the Leninist leadership principle. It is hardly necessary to say that we have nothing to do with these attempts.)

The Dutch group is no doubt right in characterizing as a remnant of social-democratic thinking the excessive importance attributed by the Brussels theses to the

state-capitalist tendencies of the present time, even tho an equal amount of social-democratic attitudes has been taken over by the dutch group itself in its own disquisitions with reference to the problem of the development of consciousness. To us also, the Brussels theses have overrated and falsely interpreted the "planned-economy tendencies" under capitalism. All the factors brought out by these theses are tendencies actually created thru monopolization and concentration but which work in a direction exactly opposite to that assumed in the theses. Even a state capitalism after the russian model calls for the revolutionary overturn, the abolition of the present possessing class. The matter that ought to be investigated is whether the russian example can be repeated in other countries or on a world scale; in other words, whether the coming revolutions might remain stuck in a state capitalism after the russian model. We do not regard this as possible, tho the grounds for our rejection of the idea shall not be given at this place. However, on the basis of the existing capitalism, it is precisely the "state-capitalist" tendencies and the attempts at "planned economy" which demonstrate with all clarity the impossibility of planned economy on the national as well as the international plane. It is only thru a revolutionary overturn and the setting aside of the present private-property relations that a state capitalism could merit consideration. The belief that the present-day capitalism could be converted into state capitalism is opposed to Marxism and to the real turn of events. The very factors brought out by the Brussels theses are an expression of the sharpening of the capitalist contradictions. In earlier numbers of the C.C. we have endeavored to prove that the present-day capitalism and planned economy exclude each other. We do not deny the existence of the capitalist tendencies pointed out by the Brussels conference, but we repeat that these tendencies are working in a direction exactly the opposite of that toward which their sponsors claim to be striving. Capitalist planning is the magnification of planlessness. This is the paradox in which reality is figured.

By way of summary, we may say that we approve (with the stated limitations) the article on "The Rise of a New Labor Movement". At the same time, however, we should like, with H.W., to see the principles there represented worked out into concrete, serviceable directives: a task in which we too shall participate. We reject, however, that part of H.W.'s disquisitions which we have denoted as a mere reiteration of the old party ideology with new terms. As regards the desire for the concretizing of the general principles expressed in the first mentioned article we can not, in relation to our own movement do otherwise than get behind the practical demands of the Brussels conference. Yet at the same

time we reject, with the dutch group, the conceptions developed by that conference with regard to the further tendencies of capitalist development. While in this respect, however, we see eye to eye with the dutch group, still we object most strenuously to the idealism expressed by that group with reference to the question of the development of class consciousness. We ourselves want an international welding together of all council-communist groups on the basis of a unified program.

The discussion to date must be continued until sufficient clarification has been attained. In subsequent numbers of the Council Correspondence, we shall publish our own proposals, and the questions here broached will be taken up in detail.

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