

“Fewer High-Falutin’ Phrases, More Simple Every-Day Deeds” —Lenin

*Report of the Political Committee to the Twelfth Central
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COMRADES:

The work of this Plenum is a continuation of the line of the Comintern laid down at the Sixth World Congress, the line that was further developed in the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI, which was established as the line of the American Party in the Seventh Convention last June.

We have no reason to modify this line in any way. Everything that has happened during this period has confirmed the correctness of this line. There is no one here to speak against this line. There is no one in the Party who retains any doubts about the correctness of our line. The resolutions of our Seventh Convention have further been approved by the CI since that time. Our problem at this Plenum is to go forward from this basis to actually put it into effect in life. If we have to critically evaluate the work of the Seventh Convention, it is that the Seventh Convention did not sufficiently concretize our line; it did not sufficiently present it sharply in terms of every-day work. That is the task of this Plenum.

We begin this Plenum with a great deal of preliminary work already done. Since the Seventh Convention of our Party we have the results of the American Commission of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. All members of the Central Committee and district leaders had an opportunity to read the resolution of the ECCI on the American question and on the Negro question, as well as the speeches of Comrades Kuusinen and Manuilsky. We have also prepared a special report on the economic crisis which is in your hands in written form, the most complete report made so far by us. All this work, all these documents, should be taken as a basis—the starting point for the work of this Plenum.

With this foundation for our work, what is the link which we must seize upon now? What is the central point which will lead us to the solution of our particular problems? It is necessary for us to establish the point of emphasis for this Plenum, grasping that

link, as Comrade Lenin used to say, the particular link in the chain to which we can cling, in order to keep the whole chain and subsequently pass on to the next link.

I think that the key can be found in a quotation from Comrade Lenin. At the time after the October Revolution when the CP of the Soviet Union was faced with the necessity of turning the entire Party towards practical work, towards getting down to grips with the very serious consideration of reality, Comrade Lenin at that time said:

“What we need is fewer high-falutin’ phrases, more simple every-day deeds, less chatter and more attention to living facts of Communist construction.”

While we are not yet facing the task of building Socialism in this country, this quotation from Lenin applies with force to the work of our Plenum. We will not solve our problems by paper resolutions or fancy oratory, we will not solve our problems by decrees of this Plenum. Our work here must be in the nature of a guide to action for the comrades in the field. Comrade Lenin said that that man who is still a member of the Party (because he has not been expelled from the Party), who thinks he can succeed in his work by drawing up resolutions, is suffering from Communist vanity. This Plenum must eliminate Communist vanity from our movement—Communist vanity which thinks a problem has been solved by drawing up a resolution. Our task is not to draw up a resolution to show how much we know about high politics. Our task is to get down to work in order that we may be able to realize the tremendous opportunities that are before the Party now. These opportunities created for us by the world crisis of capitalism, by the concrete development of this crisis in the U. S. where it is the sharpest, we have only begun to realize upon. The latest ECCI resolution on the American question said that the principal weakness of our Party is to be found in the fact that the Party was and remains a good propagandist organization, but it has not understood how to mobilize the masses for the struggle for their immediate demands and especially for their economic demands. Is this a correct characterization of the principal weakness of our Party? Is this the next link that we must seize upon in getting away from high-falutin’ phrases, getting down to practical business? I think it is. I think the entire Plenum will agree that it is correct.

Our Party has demonstrated a very good general understanding of the line. Our Party has been activized in a general way in the struggle for this line, but it has remained in the field chiefly of agitation and propaganda. It has not understood how to mobilize the

masses for struggle for their immediate demands and especially for their economic demands.

What is the importance of concretizing our general line in terms of every-day needs? There are some comrades who think that because the general course of revolutionary development is so fast, because revolutionary crises are developing so swiftly in many countries, because even in the United States, elements of the political crises begin to appear and mature, that therefore, immediate demands, concrete demands of the daily life of the workers, acquire less and less importance, and the broad, general, sweeping slogans become predominant and take the place of everything else. This conception is absolutely wrong—that with the sharpening of the class struggle, with the maturing of political questions, the immediate, small economic demands and needs of the daily life of the workers recede to the background. No one would defend such a position openly, but its influence is manifest especially in the lower units of the Party.

LEADING THE MASSES IN STRUGGLE

The Party must set itself, therefore, to convince the entire Party of the revolutionary role played by the smallest economic demands of the workers and the struggle for them. I want to call your attention in this respect to a quotation from Lenin's article that he wrote just before the October Revolution, at a time when on the order of the day was the organization of the armed uprising—the struggle for the seizure of power. What kind of slogans did Lenin put forward at that moment? Did he talk only of high politics—only of seizure of power? No, he talked about the reasons for the seizure of government—in terms of milk for the children. It is worth while for us to read a rather lengthy quotation from the article of Lenin's, *Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?* written in the early days of October, 1917:

“When the last common workman, every unemployed man, every cook, every ruined peasant sees, not from paper, but with his own eyes, that the proletarian authority is not cringing before the rich, but is helping poverty, that this power is not afraid of revolutionary measures, that it takes surplus products from the parasites and gives them to the hungry, that it forcibly moves the homeless into the dwellings of the rich, that it forces the rich to pay for milk, but does not give them a drop of it until the children of *all* the poor families have received adequate supplies, that the land is passing into the hands of those who labor on it, that the factories and banks come under the control of the workers, that serious and immediate punishment is meted out to millionaires who conceal their riches—when the poverty-stricken see and feel this, then no force

of the capitalists and kulaks, no forces supported by the hundreds of milliards of international financial capital, will be able to conquer the people's revolution. On the contrary, it will conquer the world, for in all countries the Socialist transformation is ripening; our revolution is unconquerable if it is not afraid of itself, if it entrusts full authority to the proletariat."

There is great significance, comrades, in this placing of the slogan of "milk for the workers' children" side by side with the slogan of seizure of power, the slogans of the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. This is the perfect and complete combination of all phases of the struggle, from the smallest, most intimate daily needs of workers, to preparation for seizure of government power—all in one sentence. This is the hooking up of the daily life of workers in its most intimate detail with our general political line, which we must also have in the United States. We are not yet facing the struggle for power in the United States. We are facing the struggle for the leadership of the masses. We are entering into the struggle for the possession of masses for the first time, but this lesson holds with full force, no matter what the stage of revolutionary development.

It is precisely at this point that our Party is weakest. The Party must learn in practice how to transform our correct general slogans into concrete immediate demands of the masses in their daily lives. We must completely liquidate this seeming contradiction between immediate demands and our revolutionary aims and perspectives. Such a contradiction is completely false—it is an expression of remnants of right-wing opportunism, as well as leftist sectarianism. Precisely because we are the Party of the proletarian dictatorship, we must become the foremost leader of smallest struggles for the smallest needs of the workers. Of course, this struggle for immediate demands must at all times be guided in every detail by revolutionary aims and perspectives. We do not raise immediate demands and immediate struggles in opposition to revolutionary perspective. We must conduct a most bitter and relentless struggle against such opportunist tendencies, but we cannot avoid the swamp of opportunism by being afraid of immediate economic demands. That would mean inevitably that we would wander into the deserts of sectarianism, which is just as fatal to our revolutionary movement.

HOW SHALL WE BUILD THE RED UNIONS?

Our point of emphasis must be the mobilization of workers for small demands, organization of that struggle under the leadership of our Party. The weakest point of our work in this respect lies in the trade union field. In our trade union work, we have a very

serious condition, one that is positively alarming. We are in a most favorable situation for the revolutionary movement, for the revolutionary advance. We have some advances in spite of all our weaknesses, but in our trade union work, we must acknowledge that we are witnessing a retrogression instead of advances. There are advances here and there, but on the whole, after we draw a balance of our trade union work, we find it is slipping back. The central weaknesses of our whole Party are more pronounced in our trade union work and most damaging there. Therefore, it is necessary for this Plenum to take as its central point of concentration, our work in the trade union field—in building the revolutionary unions and the revolutionary oppositions in the reactionary unions. This is our main field of work, where we must resolutely set ourselves to overcome these weaknesses.

If we try to analyze the weaknesses in the trade union work, we find that it all comes back to the same central point, that is, the general weakness of the whole Party. What are the expressions of this weakness in trade union work—why do the unions fail to advance? We find much neglect of the immediate demands, concentration on large broad sweeping slogans, which express general class interests, but we do not express concrete immediate interests of a particular group of workers. We find bad preparation and leadership of strike struggles, which is just another form of neglect of immediate demands. We find very weak connections between the union apparatus and the masses, which is another form of the same thing. We find an absolute insufficiency of trade union democracy, of collaboration in the unions of all the members in the unions. Trade union democracy, which must be the expression of the connection of our Party with the masses, is terribly undeveloped in all our unions. This is an expression of the same central weakness.

Strong remnants of bureaucratic methods taken over from the past and a corresponding weakness of trade union democracy have been the result of lack of a close connection between the masses and the Party. Only in joint work and joint solutions, together with non-Party masses, will we be able to find a practical solution of our problems.

There is also a tendency in the revolutionary unions to depend upon paid functionaries to carry on the work. A lack of unpaid organizers in the unions is apparent. Some of our smallest organizations actually build their paid staff on a larger scale than a big mass organization should have.

Resulting from this lack of a close bond between us and the

masses, there is a lack of organized, planned work. And therefore another result follows: there is no crystallization of the real leading committees in these unions. Our committees tend to melt away and reduce themselves to one person instead of a strong collective body which works as a unit and gives force, energy and push to the organization.

All of these weaknesses of our unions arise directly out of a bad approach to the mass work, a neglect of the aims, needs and wants of the masses. All of these consequences have come from Communist vanity and our neglect of the daily needs of the working masses, from the neglect of our Party to organize and struggle for them.

We have passed excellent resolutions. At the same time we must see that, in spite of all good resolutions, they have not been applied. Everybody adopts these resolutions and everybody neglects them. In making these criticisms I speak of our entire body from the leading functionaries down to the units. The entire Party shares in these mistakes.

LEARN HOW TO LEAD STRIKES

We have had considerable experience in strike struggles and the attempts to develop strike struggles in the past year. We have drawn many lessons from these. So far as the Central Committee is concerned, the Convention affirmed and our resolutions broadcast these lessons. But we still do not fully understand these resolutions and face a constant repetition of the same mistakes. We must take more seriously the learning of the lessons of our experiences for the entire Party. We also have a great many directives drawn from the experience of the entire international movement. Such concrete, detailed directives of how to organize and conduct strike struggles are contained in the resolution of the Strassburg Conference in January, 1929, almost two years ago. This resolution was published at the time in *Labor Unity*. But I don't think there are fifty people in America who studied this resolution thoroughly. Those who did read it did not understand it, and paid little attention to it, continued right ahead with the old way of doing our work and went on the same as before this resolution.

Well, the Central Committee is also to blame for some of this. The Central Committee did not thoroughly put into effect this line. It took the Central Committee more than a year to get this resolution into pamphlet form so that there could be no excuse for anyone not to have it. Still, we find much carelessness towards this pamphlet on strike strategy, although our entire trade union work must be based upon it. The Illinois miners' strike we thoroughly

analyzed at our Party Convention, but in the past weeks we have had the opportunity of seeing many of the most glaring examples of these mistakes made again in the work on the Philadelphia waterfront, the same mistakes that were made in Illinois, some of them in worse form. We saw that these mistakes were made in the Flint strike. Throughout the Party, in every phase of the trade union work, we find an absence of any deep understanding of strike strategy, and proper methods of approach to the economic demands, and the building of the trade unions in struggle. This Plenum must take up the organization and application of these lessons on strike strategy and, as well, concretize them in terms of our own experience.

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEES AND SHOP COMMITTEES

We must also look for new forms to connect ourselves up with the unorganized workers, natural forms, not invented by us in our own minds, but forms that grow out of the life of the workers. We are too mechanical in our approach to the masses. We issue the slogan: "Shop Committees," and think that will settle the problem of penetration of the shops. For two years we have been shouting "Shop Committees!" but how many shop committees have we? Very few, indeed!

What is the trouble? Is it a fact that the workers are not ready to organize, that the workers do not want to organize? I don't think anyone will maintain that. There are, of course, many obstacles to overcome in our work in the shops. There is the stool-pigeon system, more and more developed to weed out the agitators, the organizers. We must work out more definite methods to evade the stool-pigeons and be able to carry on our work without being thrown out of the shops. There are obstacles in the methods of production in the most highly rationalized shops, where contact with the workers becomes more and more difficult, in some cases impossible, while the belt is running, and so on.

There are all sorts of difficulties. But will anybody maintain that these difficulties are an explanation of why we do not make progress? Of course not. Difficulties exist only to be overcome. The reason why we must have a Communist Party, the reason why the overthrow of capitalism is a long bitter struggle led by the Communist Party, is because there are difficulties to overcome. And our business is not to find difficulties as explanations for not achieving something, but rather to explain *why we have not overcome these difficulties*. The explanation is not in the unwillingness, the unreadiness of the workers to organize, but in our mechanical approach to the question, in our failure to study the details of every shop and

every department, to find the solution, the forms of work, that will succeed in overcoming these difficulties.

There can, of course, be no single formula given that will answer all these questions. This Plenum cannot write a resolution that will solve every question in every shop. But we can turn the minds of every Party comrade and of every Party sympathizer to the task of setting themselves to examine every shop, every department, and studying it from the point of view of how we can crystallize a group of workers in this shop which will serve as an organizing center, as a nucleus of struggle for the needs of the workers, as the expression of the needs of all the workers in this shop and as the beginnings of the organization of all this work.

One reason why we have not succeeded more is because our approach to the shops has been practically that of organizing them only for the final revolutionary battle. Our Party concentration on shops, I think, in nine cases out of ten, has been merely to ask these workers to join the Communist Party. Why should they join the Party? They do not understand Communist theory, and we have not shown them the connection between our theory and the shop problems. We must approach the workers in the shops to organize them on the basis of their own needs and problems, and stimulate them as the organizing agents themselves, and hook them up with our trade unions and out of this movement as it grows, we crystallize the best elements into the Party. We must find the best forms and methods of organizing these workers in the shops. The ECCI resolution has pointed out that we have elementary forms of organization that are natural in this country, that have traditions, that have sprung up in all industries—*grievance committees* which, as is well known to the workers in the United States, present themselves in the most varied forms, including highly organized trade unions, as in the old days on the railroads; in the form of grievance committees, pit committees, which are broader than the union, as in the mining industry; in the form of grievance committees which have led entirely unorganized workers in strikes—most of the spontaneous strikes in this country have sprung up around such small grievance committees in the shops.

The workers generally understand that when you speak of the grievance committee, you mean the beginning of organization of the workers around some demand, around some grievance against the boss. Why can't we seize on this idea and develop it systematically, according to plan, with our work which is carried on from week to week and which is not sporadic, which is not unorganized? We will certainly find some such approach as this, coming to the

workers in the shops, that will enliven the whole mass contact of our trade union work. With such an approach we begin to have a base from which to develop the concrete demands of the workers, develop their struggles for these demands, and by developing these demands and struggles, broaden out the basis of our unions. The unions can be organized only by developing the consciousness of the workers that they must fight, that the trade unions are not something outside themselves but are built in the process of the workers organizing themselves in the shops. The trade union is the concentration of all these shop organizations and the multiplying of their strength for struggle by joint action for a joint program.

I have talked a great deal about the trade unions. This is absolutely necessary because the whole general work of the Party depends upon this problem, depends upon solving it. What I have said is no more than an introduction to the question. With Comrade Foster's report, we must concentrate several sessions of our Plenum upon the detailed examination of this question.

FIGHT FOR RELIEF FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Closely connected with the trade union work is the unemployed movement. We must say that in spite of all the good points of our work on the unemployed question (and they are many), there is grave danger of the comrades feeling too much satisfied with it. And the outstanding feature of our unemployment work is the weakness, the slowness, with which we have developed it, the lack of organizational crystallization we have given it, the lack of concretizing it in terms of local issues, local struggles and local demands. Of course there has been some general progress in this respect, but only here and there—no decisive general progress in the concretization of the unemployed struggle. And even the broad general aspects of the unemployment movement, we have been very slow in developing, such as the struggle for the Unemployment Insurance Bill. We are very slow in the first place in crystallizing the movement for the Bill, and since it has been launched, very, very slow in rousing a mass movement around this Bill. We still have not the realization that the movement for this Bill will be little more than a parliamentary gesture, an agitational movement, unless in the signature collections, in the demonstrations for the Bill, we proceed to organize the workers in each neighborhood, in each house, in each district, for immediate struggle for immediate demands.

Our fight for the Unemployment Insurance Bill has too much taken the form of one speech a comrade made—he was a very good comrade, a very earnest comrade—but this is what he said:

"You must vote Communist; a vote for the Communist Party is a vote for the Unemployment Insurance Bill." "Of course," he said, "you will never get this unemployment insurance until you will overthrow capitalism and establish a Workers' and Farmers' Government."

What kind of approach is this? What reaction do the masses have to such an approach? Although this speech was an extreme example, it expresses the whole general character of our fight for the Unemployment Insurance Bill. What reaction does the worker get from this? "Yes," he says, "I am for the Unemployment Insurance Bill, therefore, I am for revolution; but the revolution is not here now so I had better go down to the soup line and get myself a bowl of soup." It leaves the worker a prey to every capitalist and social-fascist demagogue who talks about getting something now. This is not an organized form of struggle for the Unemployment Insurance Bill; it is rather a movement away from the workers so far as their immediate life is concerned; it is another form of "pie in the sky,"—giving unemployment insurance after the revolution. This is the sort of thing which paralyzes our struggle for relief from hunger and starvation, upon which at this moment we must base ourselves. Our struggle must take the form of concrete organization and fights for concrete immediate relief and we will have no success unless we can impress this upon our entire Party.

Consider the eviction cases! The struggle against evictions is one of the most immediate fights for immediate relief, including fights for free gas, free water, and free electricity in the homes of the unemployed where they are being cut off from all of these necessities of life because they are unable to pay their bills. These are issues of immediate struggle and it is possible for us to mobilize large masses upon them. On the issue of preventing the cutting off of water you can mobilize all of the neighbors of the unemployed victims.

In spite of the weak development of our struggle against evictions—and it has been very weak—this struggle has been the most living part of our work. We have given insufficient attention to it. The only place that I know where it has been really systematically approached was in Detroit. In spite of this weakness it has been the one live thing in our unemployment movement that has drawn new masses directly in contact with us and under our leadership. We have attained this through our eviction struggles, and where our unemployment movement has developed, it has been where these struggles have developed. From this we must go further, we must have hunger marches to the state capitals, delegations to Congress in Washington to present the demands for unemployment insurance,

etc., simultaneously with mass street demonstrations, all with a foundation of local and neighborhood demands. Thus we can forge a powerful political weapon, and not content ourselves with mere agitational demonstrations.

WINNING THE NEGRO MASSES

Now our work on the Negro question. Here is another field where we have only begun to concentrate our work in terms of daily needs and daily struggles. Our general program has already begun to give the Party a wide ideological influence among the Negroes in spite of our extreme weakness in practical work. We must say that many districts completely ignored the work among the Negro masses, or gave it only formal attention. At the recent very successful convention in St. Louis, the American Negro Labor Congress has transformed itself into the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. Here we have an enormous field for mass work and organization. The St. Louis convention was a success in spite of the weaknesses in the districts, and the very bad organizational work in the center, weaknesses, which under ordinary conditions would have condemned the conference to death.

What does this prove? That with systematic work in this field we can have a tremendous influence over the Negro masses and rally them around the Communist Party, we can have the beginnings of real solidarity between white and black workers, in life, in action in this country. We have taken steps which will have tremendous political results in the breaking down of the old separation between white and black workers, we have shown the Negro masses the meaning of our main political slogans, and especially the slogan of self-determination which has received an instantaneous response from the Negro masses. They understand our slogans now as something that touches their daily life and that are quite different from the slogans of any other political party in the United States.

We must carry forward this advance, concretize it and give it roots in practical organization of struggles of the white and Negro workers together.

MOBILIZE THE IMPOVERISHED FARMERS

Another field of our mass work which has been almost completely neglected in the past is the work among the farmers. Our 7th Convention for the first time gave serious political attention to this question. We discussed our draft program and our analysis of the tendencies of development in agriculture; we overcame the confusions that arose. We have settled in the ECCI the various theoretical differences between us and some of the leading comrades

of the Peasant International—(Krestintern), in which we proved to be correct.

The line of our draft program of the convention has been endorsed. With the general line of policy settled, the task is to concretize it in actual work among the farmers. The situation is very favorable among the farmers for us to extend our influence. We have many reports from districts that show these favorable conditions. We can mention the election results in North and South Dakota—these are almost entirely agrarian states—where our Party received more than 7,000 votes—a six-fold increase over two years ago. This is a greater increase than we had in the industrial districts like New York.

What does this mean? It means that the conditions among the farmers are ripe for us. We have many examples of this. I believe the comrades in Detroit can report to us the experiences of sending out comrades in a car during the election campaign to the agrarian districts and the warm response the farmers gave them—farmers who knew nothing about the Communist Party except that it was against the Republican and Democratic Parties.

There are only one or two districts which systematically set themselves to establishing such contacts for the Party. Comrades, we must establish that one of the duties of every district is to develop systematic agrarian work. This must first of all take the form of establishing connections for the agricultural workers' union, establishing functioning branches of the union among the wage workers on the land, and connections among the farmers for our farmers' paper. The poor farmers and sections of the middle farmers also are ripe for this work. The farmers' paper must be the organizer and leader of our work among the farmers. Therefore the Party and all of its agrarian contacts must systematically build up the circulation of this paper, around this circulation groups of farmers, and committees of action. We will find that there are tremendous possibilities in the deep agrarian discontent. The very sharp agrarian crisis is bearing down upon the farmers equally as hard as the industrial crisis is bearing down upon the working class. The Central Committee must establish an Agrarian Department in the center, in order to lead this work, a Department which can probably also combine the work in the cooperative field which is closely related in many respects to the agrarian work, and which will give daily systematic guidance to the work of the entire Party in this field.

FOR PROTECTION OF FOREIGN BORN

Another special field of the development of our mass contacts, of our mass work, mass organization, is the field of the foreign

born workers who are subjected to special persecutions as a part of the general capitalist offensive against the working class. We have made some beginnings in this direction. These beginnings in the setting up of councils for the protection of the foreign born have been very promising. They serve as another example to the Party of how necessary it is, if we want to organize support behind the Party, to organize the struggle of the masses, to find their immediate burning concrete needs. Hundreds of thousands of the foreign born workers in the United States today feel the menace of the projected legislation for finger printing of the foreign born, the menace of deportation laws, the menace in the cities of special dismissals of foreign born workers in order to make jobs for natives; they feel the menace of the setting of the Negroes against the foreign born. In this field of struggle against the discriminations against the foreign born, we have one of the important channels of mass activity in the country today. Our efforts along this line have received response from the masses, but not such good response from the Party organizations.

Comrades, it is a sad fact that the leading cadres of our Party are not as much alive to these issues as the masses are sometimes. They tend to neglect them, and refer the whole question to a single individual while the Party Committee does not think it important enough to merit serious detailed systematic attention. This is so serious that in some sections we have witnessed these local movements get into the hands of our enemies simply because the Party was not on the job. This is a very dangerous situation, such neglect of most vital mass movements and mass organizations, and even when this neglect doesn't express itself in such dangerous forms, it expresses itself in lack of leadership, in lack of detailed working out of the problems of these mass organizations and the leaving of the organization to go on as best it can. It is not enough to have the correct lines laid down by the center. They must be concretely applied under detailed control and checked up by the Party in each district and locality, by every unit of the Party.

MASS WORK FOR THE YOUTH

Another of our main weaknesses is in the Youth work. The Young Communist League has made some progress since the Party convention; it has turned more definitely and decisively to mass work, towards the building up of the mass activity of the organization, towards curing that old ingrowing disease of the Youth organization. This progress has been hampered to a great extent by the

slowness of some of the leading youth comrades in understanding the line and putting it into practice. In some cases this slowness has been so pronounced that the result is practically sabotage in the carrying through of the Youth program of action, resistance to the line, not merely failure to carry it through. Where the line has been applied energetically and systematically, there is a distinct improvement. The League has a more healthy inner life, developing mass activity, but we must say that the Youth League must consciously complete the process of overcoming the old remnants of the past, overcoming this resistance and doubt of the line, overcoming the tendency to go off on side tracks.

There is still a tendency to interminable discussions of high politics, and with it, a suspicion that our insistence upon immediate demands, upon detailed work, represents some deep-going opportunistic tendency in the Political Bureau of the Party. This disease, which is also characterized by a subjective, group, factional and personal approach to the problems of the Youth League, must be overcome. The remnants that still remain must be wiped out, and the whole Youth organization actually drawn into constructive work, mass work among the young workers, to building up Youth sections of the Trade Union Unity League, building up a mass membership in the Youth League itself, and building a broad workers' sports movement. The Plenum will have to be directly of assistance to the Youth League in this question. The Party must more decisively express its leadership in this field. We have been overcoming step by step the weakness of the Party's leadership of the Youth work, which was very weak a year ago, and which must be greatly strengthened. I think the Party must more decisively and more steadily, every day and every week, guide the work of the Youth League.

We must also propose to the Youth Plenum which will be held in a few days, the measures that are necessary for them to complete their turn to mass work. Among these measures I think that we must have some changes in the Youth leadership. I think that we must point out the worst expression of hanging back in the leadership, of resistance to the line, as expressed by Comrade Steuben. Comrade Steuben is a candidate to the Central Committee of the Party, placed there as one of the leaders of the Youth work. The Polburo in an examination of the work of the League has had to take note of the fact that the weakest point in the leadership of the Youth work was expressed by Comrade Steuben, who has a very unhealthy tendency in his work. In the meeting last night our judgment in this respect was further confirmed by the speech

that he made to the Polburo, which convinced us that it was necessary to propose to the Plenum that Comrade Steuben be removed from the leadership of the YCL and that he be sent to work in a factory for a year or so to get rid of these unhealthy tendencies which have hampered the work of the Youth movement.

SPECIAL WORK AMONG WOMEN

Our Party in another field of work has neglected its practical tasks to a great extent, that is, the field of work among women. There is still a feeling throughout the Party that work among women, special work to draw women into the movement, into the trade unions, into the Party, into our auxiliary organizations, to find the especial interests of the women workers and upon the basis of these special interests to draw them into the general movement of the working class—there is a general feeling throughout the Party that it is not important, that this is department work, this is something that is referred to comrades who cannot do anything else. Such an idea has expressed itself in many of our Plenums, district committee meetings, etc., where comrades will report, "Well, we had Women's Work on the agenda, but it was down at the bottom and we did not get to it. There was so much to be taken up that we thought, oh well, it was not important after all, so we referred it to a sub-committee."

Comrades, what would happen to our Party if we would always refer trade union work to a sub-committee, if we would refer Negro work to a sub-committee, or Youth work to a sub-committee? It would demonstrate that we are not a serious political organization out to win the masses. Women are one of the largest groups of workers in this country. They have special oppressions, they have special grievances, special interests of their own, and if it is important for us to especially develop and emphasize the interests of the foreign born, the interests of the Negro masses, the interests of the young workers, why is it less important that we do the same thing with women? Is it because women are not good material for our movement? Anyone who has had experience will know that women are the best fighters when you once get them lined up in any kind of work connected with the labor movement. The whole history of the Miners' Union is a history in which women took a very important part from top to bottom. Some of the best fighters have been women, and in the case of miners' strikes, women have taken important parts on the picket line, in every phase of the struggle, even handling guns when necessary.

It is necessary to point out that the neglect of the work among

women by our Party districts is a criminal neglect and we are not seriously taking up our duties to one of the major parts of the working class, as long as we continue this neglect of work among women. The comrades who are more directly connected with this work will deal more intimately with certain results of this neglect. We have made a certain advance in this work. We have a regularly appearing paper, but the circulation is entirely inadequate, and many of the districts pay no attention to it whatever.

DAILY WORKER—OUR CHIEF WEAPON

This lack of attention of the districts to the mass circulation of our papers is a general neglect. Very few of the districts have set themselves seriously to the problem of getting a mass circulation for our different papers. This is one of the most important fields of our work. We cannot lead and organize the hundreds of thousands of workers for struggle merely by word of mouth.

The principal instrument of the Party in mass agitation and organization is our press, especially our *Daily Worker*. In spite of the almost complete absence of systematic attention to the circulation of the *Daily Worker* in the districts, in the cities, in the sections (I say almost complete absence—there are a few exceptions), our *Daily Worker* is one of the strongest features of our work. But it reflects every weakness of the Party. There are many shortcomings to the *Daily Worker*. But I am afraid that there are many comrades in the Party who set themselves to overcoming these weaknesses in the wrong way. In fact, I think they do not set themselves to overcome these weaknesses, that they use these weaknesses as an excuse to cover their own. I hope we will have much criticism, self-criticism and mutual criticism, of the *Daily Worker* in this Plenum, but I hope we will eliminate that type of criticism where comrades from districts come in and say: "The *Daily Worker* is no damn good; I sent in ten articles, each of ten pages, and not one of them appeared."

It is true that a great deal of material sent in from districts is not published in the *Daily Worker*—quite true. But this is one of the strong points of the *Daily Worker*, and not its weak point, that it has been refusing to print all these long high-falutin' articles from districts, and has been insisting that the districts send in news from the class struggle. The hardest job of the *Daily Worker* is getting good news from the districts. Here it would seem that the instinct of the comrade in the field in carrying on the work would be, "Let's get five or six lines of this in the *Daily Worker* just as quick as possible," but in fact, that is the last thing they

seem to think of. When comrades do send in material, they collect a mass of clippings from the local newspapers, and attach a note telling the comrades, "Please write this up." They send in only raw material to the *Daily Worker* staff, where we have five or six comrades almost starving to death, because the printing of the paper takes all the funds and leaves nothing for the wages of the staff. These five or six comrades have to spend hours on every little story because the comrades in the districts do not understand that it is their duty to report the local struggles. Often we cannot even persuade the local comrades to send in newspaper clippings.

I have before me an example of the kind of criticism of the *Daily Worker* that doesn't help solve our problems. I have a letter from Comrade Gardos in which he condemns the "scandalous neglect" of the *Daily Worker* on the situation of the strike in Reading. The fact is that the *Daily Worker* has printed three stories about the Reading strike and these three stories are everything that has been received by the *Daily Worker* about it. Comrades in the districts, instead of sending in material to the *Daily Worker*, write letters to the *Daily Worker* condemning it for not publishing stories that have really appeared.

Now, of course, the *Daily Worker* staff is not perfect. And there are a great many weaknesses in the center also. We can be more sharp with the center, if we begin by clearing out of the way all this false criticism. In the center, the shortcomings arise precisely out of the fact that the small number of comrades who have to handle so much work and write so many things, have a tendency to become mechanical. They have a tendency to slip into abstractions. They do not sufficiently put the fresh, living slogans of struggle into terms of reporting the news of the day. The *Daily Worker* is improving—we have seen a distinct improvement, especially in the last few days of the election campaign. This can be noted, but the main weaknesses still remain. While the *Daily Worker* is becoming a better propagandist and better agitational organ, it is a very weak organizer. The Party itself is a very weak organizer.

In changing the Party into a strong organizational leader of struggle, we must emphasize that the *Daily Worker* must also be an organizational leader—must put forward slogans of organization, the means of organization, not only on the back page in a long article by Comrade Schmies, but on every page of the *Daily Worker*, in five or six lines, write about shop committees, grievance committees, etc. All organizational phases from bottom up must be woven into small news items in the *Daily Worker*. One reason

why this has not been done before is that we have allowed the *Daily Worker* staff to vegetate too much in the office. Now we are changing the situation somewhat—there are a few of them here at this Plenum. We must connect the *Daily Worker* staff more closely with district work, with trade unions, and while getting more work out of them in the office, give them a little work outside also. They don't work hard enough now. (Laughter.)

LESSONS OF THE ELECTIONS

A few words about the election campaign. Here the Party showed progress. We extended our circle of supporters generally by about one hundred per cent, and in very important small industrial cities, six, seven and eight hundred per cent. The Party itself worked as it has never worked before. We had real activities of the Party in the election campaign. We saw the beginnings of new methods of work. But generally, we must say that the election campaign was a most glaring expression of all the weaknesses of the Party. Precisely because of the favorable situation, in the election campaign, there should have been the concentration of full forces of the Party to realize the possibilities among the masses—but we didn't see this. Why? The answer in the election campaign is precisely the same as the answer in every other field of our mass work. There was very little concrete campaigning in the districts. The districts got out our national Congressional platform. They did well on this. We sold 130,000 copies in English and 50,000 copies in translations; 180,000 copies of our election platform in pamphlet form were sold, and this is a distinct advance over anything we have ever done in this line before. The districts got out leaflets, large numbers of leaflets. Our total distribution in this campaign runs up to four or five million leaflets.

Why didn't we get more votes then? The Party membership was active; we had a large distribution of our program, millions of leaflets were distributed, thousands of street meetings, hundreds, if not thousands of hall meetings were held, some of them the largest election meetings held by any party. Still, we only little more than doubled our vote. The masses were sympathetic to us. We had such a hearing as we never got before. I think all of us were surprised at the warmth of sympathy of the masses of workers. Why didn't they vote for us? The reason why they did not vote for us is because we talked too abstractly about the revolution and not enough about relief for the unemployed. In fact, the little example I cited before of the comrade who told the workers that the way to get unemployed insurance was to make the revolution, was a sample of our campaign. To make a revolution

is a good way to get unemployment insurance, of course, but such agitation will not make a revolution nor build up an organization now.

We convinced hundreds of thousands of workers that the revolution is a good thing, that the Communist Party is a leader of the struggle for the revolution, therefore, they approve of the Communist Party. But we did not convince them that the Communist Party leads the fight *today*, to get something out of the capitalists. In fact, we did not set ourselves the task of convincing the workers of that. We thought we had to convince the workers that they needed the revolution and when we convinced them, they would vote for us. We overlooked the fact that the only road to the revolution is mobilization, organization, and struggles for the immediate demands of the workers. Such a mobilization for immediate demands would in no way weaken our general revolutionary slogans. It would have sharpened our slogan of class against class—made it seem a real thing for the starving worker today—so that he could feel that part of the fight for bread would be a vote for the Communist Party.

We had some very good examples which we could have used for the election campaign. A good example here in New York of how to conduct the struggle was our demonstration at City Hall, our delegation on October 16 demanding some of the money from the budget for the immediate relief of the unemployed. Comrade Nessin and others got beaten up, others outside got policemen's clubs on their heads and the socialists denounced us as uncouth and rude, but the Board met again the next day and gave \$1,000,000 for unemployment relief! Did we seize upon this to show the workers that the smallest gain that they got is through the Communist Party, that the Communist Party is the only practical Party for winning immediate demands—food and shelter for the unemployed? We did not do it, and worst of all, we did not carry forward this fight we started, nor expand it all over the entire country.

And so whenever we have a good lead, we do not appreciate it, and do not consciously develop the same kind of good work everywhere. We do too much by rule of thumb. We do not examine our work to throw out the unproductive methods and place the good example as the directive as to what must be done in every district, in every city and neighborhood.

The election campaign was also weak because it was too much of an isolated campaign. We did not hook it up with the activity of the revolutionary unions, with the issues of the work at hand,

with the strike demands in the basic industries. None of these things were brought in, and as a result, the election campaign was weakened. The struggle against war which should have been an outstanding feature of the election campaign was only expressed in the most general terms, and so on.

About the concrete organizational details of our election campaign. We have on the organizational side of the work some scandalous examples of a frivolous attitude toward revolutionary organization. For example, the state of Ohio, a most important industrial state, with one of the oldest traditions of a revolutionary movement, where the old left wing movement had a strong center, where we have had some of our most promising economic struggles—in the state of Ohio, we were not even on the ballot. Why? Because of any special difficulties placed in our way which we were not able to overcome by the most intense efforts? Not so. Simply because of neglect of the mechanical legal steps to get on the ballot and after we failed to get on the ballot in Ohio because the district could not find \$30 to print signature lists, then an almost complete failure to get on the local and county tickets afterwards.

We can only say of such an example that this is a frivolous attitude toward Party work, the kind of attitude that cannot be tolerated in the Party. We must have the same seriousness toward election struggles as toward the organization of strikes. We must be at least as serious in our organizational preparations for the fight as the bourgeoisie is. For example, we know that in New York City the head boss of Tammany Hall thought the organization for the polling of such importance that he got up at 4:30 A. M. to attend breakfast with the election workers to give final instructions before they went to the polls. But Browder did not get up at 4:30 to organize the Communist workers; Hathaway did not get up to be sure the election returns were in the *Daily Worker*. We had only a few serious election workers in the districts.

Now, the importance of this is more than the exact hour that the comrade gets out of bed; the importance is the kind of approach we make to the problem of the election campaign. In this we had a reflection of our general carelessness about organizational details. We must tighten up.

I must say a few words of political analysis of the elections. I warned against high-falutin' phrases. We do not need to spend much time in detailed explanation of the election results. But perhaps it is well to spend five minutes on high politics in analyzing the lessons of the elections, in order to guard against certain misinterpretations that may be made.

What is the outstanding feature of the election results? Does it

show that the American bourgeoisie has entered into a political crisis? I do not think anyone says the elections showed a political crisis in bourgeois ruling circles, although there have been tendencies toward such an interpretation. We are witnessing the maturing of some of the elements of a political crisis. Of course, history is traveling very fast nowadays, very fast indeed, and we cannot say that it will be a long time before the political crisis matures in the United States. But at the present time we have not to revise our general estimate of the political situation.

What did the elections show? They showed that the effects of the economic crisis are beginning to manifest themselves on a mass scale politically, by a loosening up of the old political alignments, by a more fluid condition in the political alignments of the masses, concretely expressing itself in the exceptionally large number of people who registered themselves in the primaries as non-Party, and later in the elections switched their allegiance from one party to another, or from one faction to another faction within the bourgeois parties. This is the first main result of the impact of the economic crisis upon the masses.

The second is the growing sensitiveness among the masses to the relations between questions of government and questions of economic interest to the masses. The masses more and more express the realization that government has a relation to their economic situation.

The third characteristic is more pronounced indifference to the old political slogans and catchwords of the parties. The fourth, consequently, is the development of demagogy on an unprecedented scale, as between the parties and the factions within the parties—growing competition between them, on the basis of demagogy as to who could make the appearance of promising the most without promising anything at all.

Then, fifth, there was the campaign and vote of the Communist Party; the campaign more significant, perhaps, than the vote.

Because it is quite clear that the tremendous swing from an overwhelming Hoover landslide in 1928, into an overwhelming Democratic landslide in 1930, because it is clear that this is the result of the impact of the economic crisis upon the masses, some comrades were inclined to say that, therefore, this Democratic vote is an expression of the radicalization of the masses. Comrades, we must warn against any such interpretation. It is completely wrong, politically wrong; it is not good political analysis. This vote was a witness of the bankruptcy of the myth of Hoover, bankruptcy of the "permanent prosperity" legend, bankruptcy of the idea of the engineer in politics, bankruptcy of the whole theory of organized capitalism in all its forms. Yes, it was that. It was a sign of the

loosening of the old political alignments under the impact of the economic crisis, the sign of a growing mass discontent which is blindly seeking forms of expression. But this mass political discontent did not find the channels of political radicalization, did not find a political expression that expressed the radicalization of the masses. The masses are being radicalized, but this did not express itself in the Democratic vote. The expression of this radicalization can be found in many other places, but not in the vote of the Democratic party. The vote for the Democratic Party registered a successful effort of all bourgeois parties and all their factions, to prevent the radicalization of the workers from expressing itself.

There is not a serious shade of difference in program between the two main capitalist parties, nor between them and the third capitalist party (the socialists). Within each of the parties, the various sections and groups provide approximately the same range of shadings from "reactionary" to "progressive," and all of them agree fundamentally on the same fundamental program. This program is within the confines of the interests of finance capital in every case. The special interests of parties and factions, within the general limits of the policies of finance capital, are based upon the interests of some group of the bourgeoisie, the special interests of one group as against the other groups, but in all questions relating to the relations between dominant finance capital and the exploited masses, every one of these parties and factions expresses the interests of finance capital against the masses.

It is therefore absurd to speak of one of them being more Left than the other. So that even if we could speak of the "masses moving to the Left," because they moved from the Right party of finance capital to the Left party of finance capital—even if this were true, which it is not—even so, there was no movement to the left in the movement from the Republican to the Democratic party.

Some comrades try to interpret the election in a different way. They say, yes, it is not the swing from Republican to Democratic that is significant, the significant thing, they say, is that within both parties the outstanding victories were of the progressives and the outstanding defeats were of the reactionary leaders. They point to Pinchot, a Republican progressive, winning in Pennsylvania, while reactionary Republicans were being defeated by progressive Democrats elsewhere, and so on. It shows a swing to the "left" they say, because the progressive factions won against the reactionary factions.

Nothing of the kind. The difference between these factions is not a difference between reactionary and progressive, but between those

who stuck to the old methods of appealing to the masses and those who realized the need of new and demagogic methods of appeal to the masses, for the same program—a conflict in demagogy and nothing else. There are real conflicts of interest between these factions, yes, conflicts between different groups of the bourgeoisie, every one of which is subordinate to finance capital. Therefore there is no sense in giving classifications of “reactionary” and “progressive” to the factions within the old parties. We have to study these factions and find out the real underlying differences behind their masks of “reactionary” and “progressive,” but we must not be fooled by these masks for one minute. We must not lose sight of the fact that behind these masks there exist the elements of fascism, the same for both of them. In some cases the progressive leaders themselves are the direct bearers of fascism in the capitalist camp. And let us not fall into the error of classifying them offhand as “left” merely because the Chicago *Tribune* interprets the elections as a general swing to the left. Nothing of the kind. The real sign of the radicalization of the masses, to be found in the elections, is the enormous increase in demagogy required from all the capitalist parties in order to prevent a profound radical expression of the masses; and further in the doubling of the Communist vote.

BUILD MASS ORGANIZATIONS

A few words about the general question of the work of our auxiliary organizations. We must give more detailed attention to the building of our auxiliary organizations and finding new forms of organization, or developing old forms that have been neglected, where they particularly fit our needs today, of concretizing the immediate economic needs of the masses.

Particularly, comrades, we must register in the Plenum the necessity of giving a very definite mass development to the mutual aid societies which are under our influence, or within which we can work and develop very definite class programs. We must link them up with the whole revolutionary work of our Party as links with the masses, links representing certain economic and cultural needs of the working class reaching workers who could not be reached otherwise. We must definitely set the forces to work which will bring about a unification of all of these various mutual aid organizations, bring them together insofar as this is possible without narrowing the mass base. We must unite their forces as much as possible, strengthening them financially and ideologically, and bringing them under the influence of the revolutionary movement. Too many mass organizations are such only in theory, while in practice they are merely agencies for collecting money by various means to pay their overhead

expenses. Comrades, this kind of mass organization we do not need. This is a parasite on the movement and stands as a barrier between us and the masses. We want mass organizations with mass membership that function and control the organizations under the leadership of our Party. We do not want bureaucratic caricatures of mass organizations—and practically all of our mass organizations suffer from tendencies in this direction. I think the I.L.D., for example, in only a very few districts really has a mass membership. The only district where I have been able to find a considerable mass I.L.D. membership organization was in Chicago. Perhaps it exists in some other district, but if so, I do not know about it. Mainly it exists by drawing out of the air unorganized contacts or by circularizing thousands of names, sending circular letters that draw in a few contributions, and wastes a great deal of time in mimeographing endless numbers of circulars, postage, and loads of paper and ink. We must eliminate this process of trying to organize through the Post Office and of reaching our contacts by circulars; we must establish living contacts and a membership which will support our organizations.

The problem of building new cadres: This is a very burning problem with us. We must give this much more serious attention. We must develop systematic training and the circulation of theoretical literature as well as mass literature in our Party. I cannot take time to talk very much about this in my report but comrades of the School Committee will deal with this. They will tell you about the plans that have been prepared. We must also have plans for all of the district schools and for the whole question of training cadres and raising the level of the existing cadres. This must be given real serious attention.

Comrades, I do not want to extend the time set for this report. I realize that to a certain extent the report has been somewhat sketchy and schematic and that this report has suffered from the general defects of our Party in lack of sufficient concretization. I hope, however, there has been sufficient example of concretization, of trying to bring our line from the clouds down to the ground, example of Bolshevik elimination of high-falutin' phrases to make room for the practical tasks of the Party. The comrades who are here from the C.C. and the Districts will be able to carry this much further, concretize it more, giving more political substance to the whole life of the Party.

We are entering, we are in, a period of great difficulties and great opportunities. The coming winter is going to be one of the deepest crisis for world capitalism and for capitalism in the United States. Capitalism in the U. S. is hardest hit of all capitalist countries. The

forces of revolution rising throughout the world also express themselves in this country. We have the task of organizing, crystallizing, leading these forces, giving them a sound basis of organization among the masses, establishing the leadership of the revolutionary section of the working class over the broad discontented masses that will be brought into action by the daily struggles. The tremendous opportunities that are afforded to us in this country, we must utilize in the most business-like manner. Some comrades may object to the connotation of "business," but there are some parts of business we should not be opposed to learning from, so that we go about our work with the same intense seriousness with which one goes about the business of getting a livelihood, the same intense seriousness that comes of being hungry and going after something to eat, the same intense concentration upon practical accomplishment of the goal we set ourselves. This is the only way in which we will be able to make the most of the opportunities that will be presented to us in the coming winter.

It is in this spirit that we should approach our problems in this Plenum. We have no need to get lost in high-falutin' political discussions, or to re-examine the line of our Party. The most political, really Bolshevik, task is that of expressing our correct line in the terms of everyday life—and this is the task of the Plenum.

