

FOR A FIGHTING COMMUNIST PARTY!

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Comrades Dennis, Williamson and others have outlined to us the main line of policy. The National Committee has thoroughly agreed with this line. What I want to stress here in behalf of the Secretariat is the role of the Party in meeting the many tasks that confront us.

In the disturbed situation following the war, we have seen the Party and the nation face a host of complicated and urgent problems. Never in the history of our Party did we have so many great problems to meet. Many of these problems are literally of a life and death character, and through them all runs the common thread of necessity for struggle against reaction.

First, we face a tremendous educational problem in the sense that we have to help the masses of the American people understand that the United States has embarked on an imperialist policy aimed at domination of the world. The American people do not have this idea at all, and it is a very difficult one to give them. But it is very fundamental that this be done. We have to explain that the real policy of the Truman government is imperialist, and to show the dangers in this to our country and the world. We also have to explain to the masses that the essence of the foreign and domestic policy of the leadership of the A. F. of L. is also imperialist. If we had nothing else to do, this one task of

teaching the people the significance of American imperialism would be sufficient to tax the strength of our small Party.

But, of course, there are all sorts of other huge and urgent problems—the fight for full employment, for 60,000,000 jobs. There is no need for me to stress how vital this fight is, and what a tremendous struggle it involves. At other times, if we had nothing else to do, this one issue would be enough to occupy every particle of strength we have.

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Then, there may also be mentioned the problem of the organization of the unorganized. Some comrades here have pointed out that now is an extremely favorable opportunity to organize the unorganized workers, of whom there are many millions. This is correct. Once again I will say, if our Party had nothing else to do we could make this problem a central task of our Party.

There is further the tremendous wage campaign, which threatens to develop into a gigantic strike movement, arraying millions of workers in the basic industries against the greatest trusts in the United States. It is one of the most fundamental and far-reaching movements in the country. This movement, if handled correctly can result in a great victory for the

workers of this country, but on the other hand the workers can suffer if mistakes are made. We have lots of tasks in connection with this great struggle. In fact, the wage movement literally clamors for our leadership and support. There are many dangers that the workers face and must be organized against. The most serious of these is an underestimation of the seriousness of the situation, of the sharpness of the resistance the unions will have to face. There is also an underestimation of the dangerous attitude of the Truman government, marked by tendencies to rely on the Truman government as on the Roosevelt government in the past period. There is also not yet a realization of the extent to which the A. F. of L. leadership is knifing the wage movement. To educate the workers to all these dangers calls for great activities on our part. If our Party was ten times as big as it is at present, this task would be big enough to occupy our entire attention.

But I must add still other important problems to those I have already noted. There are the vital elections of 1946—the Congressional elections—in which not only the fate of our country, but to a very great extent that of the whole world is involved. If the reactionaries succeed in winning a victory in this election, it will bode ill for the rest of the world as much as for us. Consequently, preparations for carrying through the 1946 election campaign will call for the greatest mobilization on the part of labor in the history of the United States and this naturally throws upon the shoulders of our Party very heavy tasks which we cannot possibly ignore.

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If I haven't already given you enough tasks, I can add a few more. There is also the great problem of the internationalization of the atomic bomb. We know the tremendous struggle going on in this country, in fact all over the world, over this question of the atomic bomb. Here I might say in the spirit of self-criticism that I do not think we have paid enough attention to the atomic bomb question either in our general report, or our discussion at this National Committee meeting.

Finally, to cite a problem of decisive world importance, there is the question of the intervention of the United States in the Chinese civil war, a crime which threatens the peace of the whole world, and one which calls for the utmost activity of our Party in every sphere of action.

There are also a whole series of other very urgent problems. Among these problems may be mentioned the campaigns for world trade union unity, activities to resist the imperialist maneuvers of our government in Germany and Japan and in the Balkans, to abrogate the White Paper in connection with Palestine, to organize great relief campaigns for the war-ravaged countries in Europe, to combat the government demands for universal military training, to defend the threatened interests of the Negro people, to fight against the rising cost of living, to fight the outrageous pro-fascist activities of the Rankin Committee, to bring about practical working relations between the workers and the veterans, and to tackle the fundamental problems of developing better relations between the workers and the farmers.

The mere listing of this formidable array of problems indicates at once the terrific struggles developing in this period we are now living through. It also emphasizes the tremendous tasks placed upon our Party as a vital part of the people's democratic forces. None of these tasks that I have cited can be neglected without our running the danger of suffering serious defeats, if not actual catastrophe.

This situation, with all these urgent problems, should teach us two fundamental lessons, both of which have been expressed in the reports of Comrades Dennis and Williamson.

The first of these fundamental lessons that we have got to grasp is the necessity for concentrating our efforts upon the most crucial of the many problems confronting us. We must, as Lenin taught us, seize the key links which will enable us to move the whole chain. On the domestic field, as the resolution we have just adopted indicates, the key problem that confronts us is the fight for wage increases. To this we must devote our major attention. . . .

On the international scale, the key task, as emphasized in Comrade Dennis' report, is to stop American intervention in China. This war on China by the American forces is growing more menacing. In today's paper we note that Gen. Wedemeyer is quoted as saying that the United States is now prepared to fire on the Chinese Communists unless they abide by rules laid down by the American military leaders in China. The war in China is the key of all problems on the international front and it is here, above all else, where we have to deal the hardest blow to reaction.

There are millions of workers, millions of Americans in various classes, who are ready to go into action on these great issues. But we all know from past experience that to a large extent the struggle of the people will depend very largely upon the extent to which our Party is able to give leadership to these huge masses of the people. On the question of China, which is our key concentration, as Comrade Dennis pointed out, we want to hold 500 meetings all over the country to mobilize all the forces of the people that we can reach to put a stop to the intervention in China. Our Party must use every ounce of its strength and skill and organizational ability to make these 500 meetings a success.

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These struggles will be a supreme test of the ability of our Party to function effectively in such a complicated and difficult situation as we now confront. We must keep clearly in mind that if we concentrate on these two key problems of the wage movement and American intervention in China as the most burning and urgent of all the tasks confronting us, this does not mean that we can neglect the many other vital problems I have mentioned, that we can disregard them, or wait until we have first made a success of the two particular major concentration campaigns before we undertake anything else. To do this would be a fatal mistake on our part. For example, would it not be a big mistake to neglect the fight over the atom bomb? On the contrary, we must find the ways and means to participate to a much greater extent than we are now doing

precisely in the mobilization of the people over this vital issue. We must also, at all costs, prepare for an all-out participation in the 1946 elections. We must, while concentrating on these two key questions of domestic and foreign policy—the wage movement and intervention in China—learn how to link up all the other struggles we are carrying on.

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Never in all its history was our Party called upon to use such generalship. It must make the most effective use of its limited forces as never before. It must find more and more effective ways to ally itself with the broader masses in motion. This is a supreme masses of the people and to set these test of the maturity of our Party.

The second fundamental lesson we have to learn from this situation is the imperative need for a stronger and better functioning Communist Party. We are now at the stage of development in the United States where we must have a far more powerful Communist Party. History will not take "No" for answer in this matter, considering all the tremendous problems that the American people are now facing, and in the solution of which the activity of the Communist Party is indispensable.

Comrade Williamson in his report outlined many of the most important tasks in the building of the Party. I want to stress just a few of them. For one thing, and it appears to me this is the starting point, we must strengthen our democratic centralism. We must have more democracy in our Party. And we are building our Party democ-

racy. This was well illustrated by the discussion over the veterans questions which we have just concluded. I think that everybody who was present here must have sensed from the course of this discussion that we have a new spirit in the life of the Party.

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There is a new democracy, a new Communist democracy, developing in our Party. One of the manifestations of this, is that we are beginning to develop a really collective leadership. The report presented here was not prepared by someone who went off to the country and wrote in an ivory tower, and then rammed it down our throats. It was fully discussed and everyone on the National Board contributed to it. Dennis wrote most of the report and contributed, in my opinion, many of the principal points. We are, I repeat, developing a collective leadership. Our National Board is now a democratically functioning body.

We are also beginning to cultivate some new cadres, new leading cadres in the Party. I think that is pretty obvious from what's been happening here in this National Committee meeting. Under the general head of developing collective leadership, we in the center are setting up committees in all spheres of activity, and the districts are beginning to do this as well. This committee system, instead of the one-man system we had before, is fundamental to the development of real democracy in our Party.

Comrades, actually, we in the center who are well acquainted with the Party, have been astonished to note the

wreckage that was caused by the revisionist policies that the Party had been afflicted with in the recent past. Since the convention we have actually been reconstituting the Party from the ground up and we have had to carry on this reconstruction in the face of many political and organizational problems piling in on us from every direction.

Together with more Party democracy we must have an improved discipline in the Party. The two are not incompatible. Indeed, there can be no real Communist democracy without firm Communist discipline.

Here at this National Committee meeting we have had an example of the need to discipline a comrade. I refer to the Comrade Donchin case. I hope that the comrades will not interpret the penalty we have applied as some kind of punishment because Donchin had the temerity to rise up and criticize the National Board, or members of the Secretariat. Such is not the meaning of this case. Donchin, if he had merely criticized the National Board, would have met with no objection. If the District Committee in Philadelphia had spontaneously expressed a criticism of the National Board that would be a legitimate expression of democracy in the Party. But what Donchin did was something entirely different. His actions were a violation of both Party democracy and Party discipline. He accused the National Board, particularly some members, of deliberately falsifying the resolution of the Convention for the purpose of shielding themselves from responsibility for the revisionism and bureaucracy of the past. When the Board did not agree with this point of

view, Donchin instead of appealing to the National Committee, as was his right, went back to the District and undertook to mobilize the membership of Eastern Pennsylvania against the Board.

That is factionalism, not democracy. Donchin thought that the opportune moment had arrived for him to develop a factional fight. We all know how unsettled the Party was after its radical change in line and leadership. We know that the Party was going through one of the most critical periods in its life. It was just at that moment, when every Communist had the duty to rally the Party and put it on an even keel, that Donchin proceeded to strike. Consequently he had to be disciplined. Obviously such a comrade has no place on our National Committee.

We have got to have a more disciplined Party. We are going into a difficult period, and this will require a firm, united and disciplined Party.

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The second thing we have to do in order to strengthen our Party is to overcome the passivity in our ranks. It is a well-known fact that only a small percentage of our membership is active in carrying out our campaigns. This passivity is one of the special heritages that we have from the Browder period of revisionism. Of course, there was considerable passivity before that, but the revisionist period particularly, cultivated this passivity. We must make the most serious efforts to overcome it. We must raise the morale of our Party and put the whole Party to work. If we can do this, if we can really enthuse the Party

with a fighting and a working spirit the effectiveness of our Party will be increased manifold. This is no routine matter. We have got to mobilize our Party. We cannot stand for passivity in our ranks. We have got to bring this matter home to our comrades by an intensive ideological campaign, by a systematic mobilization of our membership for the big tasks confronting us. We must get our whole Party into action. Overcoming passivity in the Party is one of the most fundamental things that we have to do at the present time.

A third basic necessity for us is to recruit more members, especially basic workers, into the Party. We must take this job in hand as never before. We have said this many times before in the history of our Party, but we have got to do it in a new way now. All over the world the Communist Parties are growing, and we must grow too. Of course, the conditions are not as favorable for us to grow as they are in Europe, but we all know there are plenty of opportunities for our Party to grow in the United States, and we must see to it that the Party does grow. In our campaign to build the Party, the registration campaign must be taken up in a new and more urgent way in the light of the immense problems that confront us. We must also pay special attention to the returning Party veterans. We must not assume that all these comrades will automatically resume membership in the Party. Let me also say that we must find ways to broaden the financial base of the Party. This is a major question. There is too much underestimation of the financial side of our work. Neglect of Party finances was one of the

marked aspects of Browder's revisionism.

The fourth and last point I want to stress on the question of Party building is that we must transform the Party into a Party of struggle. Everything depends upon this. One of the worst manifestations of Browder's revisionism was to kill the fighting spirit of our Party and to tend to turn it merely into a propaganda or agitational organization. His general idea of Communist Party action seemed to be that he should make a big speech and that the Party should spread it over the country in huge quantities. We must, of course, not lessen our agitational activities, but we must at all costs throw our Party into struggle.

It was on this question of weakening the Party as a fighting organization that I first came into conflict with Browder, as much as ten years ago. Browder was not a fighting leader and he did not cultivate a fighting party. Perhaps the first roots of Browder's revisionism were precisely his weakening of the Party's fighting spirit. We must get over that and learn that we have got to have a fighting and working Party. Our Party now is beginning to become a fighting Party again. But there is still much passivity and hesitancy. At our Eastern Conference on the question of the wage movement and the fight for full employment, when we checked over what the Party had done in the preceding weeks, I was surprised at the tentativeness and the amateurish way that many sections of the Party approached the task of developing this struggle. This showed how much out of practice the Party was in actually conducting active mass

struggles jointly with our allies, and how badly Browder's revision had undermined the Communist militancy of our Party.

Now take the question of the intervention in China. I don't know what you comrades think about it, but I cannot for the life of me understand how the leaders of a district can see such a situation as this developing without immediately taking action and proceeding to call meetings, to get in touch with our allies, and try to get resolutions of protest adopted, etc. I think there was a fairly good lead on this matter given from the Center. We spoke out early, gave correct slogans, and here in New York a very substantial mass meeting of protest was held. Yet numerous districts seemed to pay no attention to the whole business and displayed no initiative. Such moods of inactivity must be radically overcome. We have got to re-awaken the Party and transform it quickly into a party of mass struggle.

I cannot stress too much the burning necessity of making our Party a party of struggle. By improving the activity of our Party we can enormously increase its strength and recruit large numbers of new members into it. This increased strength is imperative for our Party in view of the great problems we and the other forces in the democratic coalition now face.

In conclusion, let me say that we have had a good National Committee meeting. It shows that the Party is unified, that it is basically absorbing the new line adopted by our Convention, and that it is once more actively getting into the mass struggle. Now let us go back to our respective districts, and on the basis of the correct policies adopted here, mobilize our Party around the issues we have clarified, strengthen systematically our contacts with our mass allies, and really build our Party into the powerful mass Communist Party that it should and must be.