

NO. 6

FORE'NAFT

JUNE

MARITIME COMMITTEE FOR a Communist Party

P.O. BOX 157
COOPER STATION
NEW YORK 3, N.Y.

IN THIS ISSUE

1. NMU ELECTIONS
2. THE TANKER AGREEMENT - THE HIRING HALL - THE INJUNCTION
3. THE ARCHIVE RATS BEHIND THE DRAFT RESOLUTION (CPUSA)
4. TWO LETTERS TO FORE'N AFT

* * * * *

NMU ELECTIONS

Another month to go and the NMU election results will be known. In reviewing the tactics used by both machines during the election campaign one fact stands out clearly; that Tammany Hall can learn a thing or two from both the Caucus and the fake Communist mis-leadership. Leaflets were issued by both sides based not on policy and program but on slander, character-assassination and lies. Curran challenges opposing candidates on their citizenship and the Party in turn challenges Caucus candidates on their citizenship. The Caucus untruthfully and maliciously accuses Palazzi of finking in the spring 1936 strike and the waterfront Branch (with approval from the ninth floor) under the influence of the unprincipled and sinister Lannon accuses innocent ex-Party members of working with the Caucus, Trotskyites, anti-Semitic and anti-Negro elements, culminating in a despicable, malicious and lying expose in the April 5th issue of the Daily Worker. The Party leadership creates a lynch spirit in organizing minority groups into blocs for the purpose of influencing the elections, and Curran and the Caucus creates a lynch spirit through red-baiting for the same purpose. It is a well-known fact that many honest and sincere rank and filers have misguidedly contributed money to Curran for Caucus activities, whereupon the Party leadership issues a leaflet showing photostatic copies of cancelled checks made out to Curran and an arrow pointing to a statement made by Admiral calling on the shipowners to support Curran, the implication being that Curran in this instance was paid off by the shipowners. The Caucus in turn demands that the Party make public the funds for the Ferdinand Smith Defense Fund and other monies collected for the "Turn to for the NMU" campaigns. This is part of the pattern by which the Caucus and the fake Communists carry on their "class" combat.

* * * * *

THE TANKER AGREEMENT - THE HIRING HALL - THE INJUNCTION

We knew it would happen!

Readers of Fore 'N Aft should refer to our issue #2. We must quote from that issue:

"At the membership meeting in New York February 9, both officials and rank and filers suddenly became articulate around the question of contract expiration on June 15. Despite much oratory, the basic lack of agreement around a program involving the real and immediate interests of the seamen was apparent in all the leaders in the National Office!"

"The leadership of the Union is split on the question of June 15 purely on procedural issues. Two different schools of opportunism cannot even agree upon their mutual fundamental agreement -- maintain the status quo -- defend the hiring hall -- ignore the real interests of the seamen by projecting no program for the real advancement of their interests.".....

...."At this early date our leaders have in effect "serv'd notice" upon the shipowners that our major demand for renewal of contract is our defense of our hiring hall. This is wrong. We must make concrete demands for improvements inasmuch as the shipowners are bloated with profits in 1948. If we continue this present farce and enter negotiations with only token demands, with our main emphasis upon the defense of our hiring hall, the shipowners would do well to permit the Union to retain the hiring hall, at the saving to them of no wage increases or contract improvements for the seamen. We must not accept this as a great victory on June 16. Our hiring hall is no basis for negotiations. It has been traditionally ours since the inception of the Union and we refuse to consider any contract depriving us of this most prized possession. When we voluntarily make it our bargaining point, we give legality to the Taft-Hartley Law, and aid and comfort to the shipowners. Our struggle with the shipowners must be on for greater gains, not defense of those already long on..."

For the past year there has been no basic difference between Curran and the Party on the hiring hall issue. Once the perspective was raised to "preserve the hiring hall", a major tactical error was committed.

The leadership incorrectly permitted the hiring hall to become a "negotiable" issue with the shipowners instead of correctly ignoring it, but at the same time realistically preparing and indoctrinating the membership to defend it physically if necessary along with our positive demands. Upon being trapped by the shipowners into this position, real negotiations automatically came to a halt.

Therefore, when the Tanker operators offered Curran a "negotiated" hiring hall he accepted. This was a logical result of the conditions

that were created in the Union. We received a \$5 piece-off and an injunction.

Last week a Tanker that arrived from the West Coast voted on the tanker agreement. The three party members aboard voted for the agreement and the other members of the crew voted against it. Since the Party mis-leaders were unable to reach all Party members with the new line the Party people aboard voted for the agreement because this was the inevitable result of a 6 month campaign to "save the hiring hall."

McKenzie, who had personally negotiated all tanker agreements for the past ten years, suddenly discovers that "there is a dangerous clause in it." McKenzie, who prides himself on always being the first to admit a mistake, has consistently made one blunder after another. Hardly has the echo of his most recent confession and apology faded into the darkness than McKenzie again emerges into the light walking swiftly in the wrong direction. Are these nauseating confessions of McKenzie a mere formality (we Marxists are the first to admit our mistakes) or are they a prelude for the next blunder.

McKenzie in a recent statement stated that if the injunction is extended for 80 days, the shipowners during that period will chisel on the agreement and fire all militants from the ships and since under the injunction you cannot take any job action, the Union will be powerless to protect these men. In addition, if at the end of 80 days the NLRB or the courts decide that the hiring hall under the Taft-Hartley Law is illegal that will be the end of the hiring hall, as there will be no militant members left aboard the ships to defend the hiring hall in such an eventuality.

Here McKenzie reveals his deep rooted contempt for the intelligence of the seamen and his lack of confidence in their ability to forge a maximum unity in the face of a threat to the security of each and every one. This the membership can do despite the shipowners, despite Curran, and despite Howard McKenzie himself. Toward that end should McKenzie assist in establishing the preconditions for a successful struggle in defense of the hiring hall, through a clear and correct indoctrination of the whole membership. Weeping and sniveling about the abuses of the shipowners will not bring about any leniency on their parts, but rather make them more relentless in their drive against the organization of the seamen.

To talk about a strike upon the expiration of the temporary 10 day injunction is useless, and to attempt to precipitate such action is dangerous and divisive inasmuch as the membership voted to abide by the injunction at the last meeting at Manhattan Center. While we do not agree that the membership acted intelligently in its own behalf by voting to abide by the injunction, to attempt to railroad and stampede the rank and file into a decisive action on June 24 may be a dangerous adventure insofar as it may be contrary to the desires and understanding of a large section of the membership. When the necessity for strike action becomes obvious to the overwhelming majority of the membership, then such action can be successfully initiated - and over the heads of those leaders who so busily engaged in their own factional struggle

cannot recognize the temper and desires of the rank and file. To correctly prepare the seamen for strike, and to work for the unity of the whole membership around strike action becomes the assignment of every Communist.

It is our opinion that the Party leadership is less interested in achieving the maximum unity from the workers in defense of the hiring hall, than they are in exploiting the injunction for their own factional interests against Curran.

If during an 80 day injunction period a maximum unity of the seamen is attained through their recognition of chiseling on the status quo by the shipowners, then we are no longer "legally" bound to abide by its terms. In anticipation of chiseling on the status quo by the shipowners, the seamen should be prepared for the taking of decisive action in their own defense.

Communists should remember that a unified strike of workers in defense of their demands has greater inviolability than the "inviolability" of any number of "laws" passed by any coalition of shipowners and government agents. In this respect two mystical beliefs and illusions must be destroyed in the minds of the workers. The first is the idea that workers cannot strike against the government. American workers (led by their opportunist and labor-faking leadership) recently have too easily capitulated before the strike-breaking activities of the government. They should take a lesson from their brothers in France and Italy for whom the "law of the land" means less than a determined struggle for their own rights and dignity as workers. French bullets and Italian bayonets have been no deterrent in their correct and revolutionary struggle. American seamen can and must initiate for all American workers a correct and principled struggle against all forces in opposition.

The second belief which Curran and some other Caucus leaders would like to foster in the thinking of the seamen is that we can expect some degree of justice from the government. This is an especially fantastic idiom in the light of the whole series of strike-breaking activities by Truman and the Administration. Communists must point out that the role of the State under Capitalism is the main instrument for the oppression of the workers. A correct and revolutionary workers movement attacks all oppressions regardless of whether the oppressor is the shipowner using the overt medium of lockout and the importation of scab labor, or the government, using the medium of Fact-Finding Boards and court injunctions, behind which the shipowner covertly rides.

The dangers that existed for the seamen several months ago have become realities today, due to the unprincipled factional struggle among the leadership, which consequently led to a betrayal of the seamen's interests. At present, the membership is disorganized and confused with the shipowners, the government, and their own leaders aligned against them. Thrust backwards in their struggle, and forced into a purely defensive fight as a result of these conditions. The membership must be made aware of still greater dangers. They must be put on guard against a complete betrayal by Curran and the Caucus who would argue the safety of accepting any final government decision, no matter how disastrous to

the welfare of the seamen.

Fore 'N Aft would like to call special attention to Curran's betrayal of the membership's interests by his statement to the press several days before the injunction was issued that the Union would abide by such an injunction. This notoriously anti-working class action on Curran's behalf, without the approval of the membership, gave assurance to the shipowners and the Government that the membership would not defend itself against the injunction.

The membership must similarly be put on guard against any attempt by the Party leaders to provoke a premature and haywire strike against the injunction, which might be completely disorientated and out of context with the sentiments and understanding of a major section of the rank and file.

Sincere Communists and all those who are interested in carrying forward a correct and principled struggle should work with the rank and file towards the development of a real understanding of the issues. When the maximum unity of the seamen is attained through a correct orientation, then strike action in defense of their hiring hall and demands becomes the order of the day.

Fore 'N Aft supports and encourages a strike against the injunction, in defense of the seamen's demands, when the membership itself is prepared to take such action in its own interests, and not in the interests of an unprincipled faction, involved in a struggle for power.

THE ARCHIVE RATS BEHIND THE DRAFT RESOLUTION

"Who, save hopeless bureaucrats, can rely on paper documents alone? Who, beside archive rats, does not understand that a Party and its leaders must be tested first of all by their deeds and not only by their declarations? History knows not a few Socialists who readily signed resolutions, no matter how revolutionary, in order to escape their annoying critics. But that does not mean that they carried out these resolutions. Furthermore, history knows not a few Socialists who, foaming at the mouth, called upon the workers' parties of other countries to perform the most revolutionary actions imaginable. But that does not mean that they did not in their own party, or in their own country, shrink from fighting their own opportunists, their own bourgeoisie. Is not this why Lenin taught us to test revolutionary parties, trends and leaders, not by their declarations and resolutions, but by their deeds?" (Original emphasis)

(J. Stalin in MARXISM AND REVISIONISM, Little Lenin Library, Vol. 29, p.60-61)

The Draft Resolution for the National Convention of the Communist Party appeared in The Worker of May 30, 1948. It is designed to serve as the basis for discussion during the sixty day period preceding the Convention, which has now been postponed again until August 3 to 6, 1948. The Draft Resolution, and particularly the Party's announced perspective and program, are not "things in themselves" which can be evaluated out of context. On the contrary they take their meaning and must be judged in the framework of recent statements of the Party leaders, and of the Party's policies and tactics in the recent period, as well as by internal evidence in the Resolution itself, by what it says and by what it fails to say.

Since the 1945 Convention, and increasingly in the months since the organization of the Communist Information Bureau signalled the beginning of a new period, in which greater responsibility of individual Communist Parties to the world movement would be demanded, the CPUSA has followed a course of projecting a correct Marxist-Leninist policy in its theoretical organ, Political Affairs, and to a lesser extent in the Daily Worker, while at the same time pursuing or permitting National Board members or CP trade union leaders to pursue a quite different course in the unions and other mass organizations. This device has the great advantage that it permits the Party leadership to establish a paper record of correct Marxist policies to forestall possible "interference" from Belgrade, and at the same time to continue its chronic opportunist policies, and to shift to others by one means or another blame for the disastrous effects of those policies on working class unity. It has however led to serious confusion and distrust among Party members and among workers generally, who as a result have been unable to make a unified or successful fight against the agents of the bourgeoisie in their mass organizations, and have suffered a succession of demoralizing defeats.

The unanimous vote of the Party delegates at the CIO national and state conventions for the Marshall Plan, and at the N. Y. State Convention to censure the Soviet Union's use of the UN veto and to restrict its use are examples of this practice. A variety of excuses have been offered for these and other anti-Soviet Union and anti-working class actions. That most commonly put forward has been that only by such a course could "unity" be preserved. Unity with the so-called "Centrists" Murray and Carey in support of the Marshall Plan and of the infamous "no interference" resolution at the Atlantic City Convention. Unity with Hollander and Potofsky on the UN veto resolution. This excuse has the advantage of pretending that we were jettisoning one principle, solidarity with the Soviet Union and the workers of the Marshall Plan countries, in order to salvage another principle, unity of American workers (as if the two could be irreconcilable). Little Marxist reflection is needed to show that "unity" with the labor tools of American imperialism can only mean disunity and a knife in the back of American workers. And this the event has fully proved.

Recoiling from the seriousness of the defeats which their capitulations had invited, the Party leadership has sought to dissociate itself from the responsibility for its actions. "The Party's policy",

they now say, "was correctly opposed to these actions, but incorrect applications of the policy must of course be expected." In the case of the CIO "no interference" resolution for instance this "expected" gap between theory and practice occurred, we are now told, "because while the Party tried to get the CP delegates not to vote for it, it was unable to control them." This happens to be contrary to the facts, and even were it not, it would not explain short of mutiny in the top echelon how some members of the National Board approved and defended the delegates' actions in the DV. This inability to enforce discipline among top CP trade unionists who collaborate with the class enemy, whether real or a sham, is in sharp contrast to the prompt and efficient, if usually-illegal, expulsions of Comrades who dare to criticize the Party's opportunist policies and leadership.

Other variations of the scapegoat technique for keeping the heat off the leadership are to accuse practically anyone except the CP leadership of the very opportunist errors for which it is responsible. Browder is of course a favorite whipping-boy. Thus Stachel (DW, January 2, 1948) on the Boston Marshall Plan sellout of Dennis, Williamson and Co., denounces Browder as a class-collaborationist. And now the Draft Resolution blames the "capitulation of the reactionary and reformist top leaders of CIO and AF of L" for the lassitude of the workers in organizing resistance to the offensive of the imperialist war-mongers. No one expected anything else from most AF of L and right-wing CIO leaders, but it was precisely the capitulatory and reformist role of the very CP labor leaders to whom the class-conscious workers looked for guidance which proved the most damaging blow. Time and again in their Plenum reports Dennis and Williamson generously invite the Party membership, or the trade unionists or the workers to share the blame of failure when they were permitted by these leaders to part in the wrong decisions which caused the failures.

Other stratagems employed by the National Board and the National Committee to assume credit where it is not due, or to avoid blame in the eyes of foreign Parties or their own membership are failure to report on important phases of Party work, generalized statements of errors out of relation to their impact on the workers' struggles, and plain-falsification.

The Draft Resolution states that: "The Communist Party from the earliest days after the end of the war, understood that its traditional fight for a new people's party directed against the two-party system of the monopolies had once more been placed by events as an immediate practical question before the American people, and acting upon this understanding, it boldly proclaimed the need for such a new people's party." Yet, as a matter of fact, nothing could be farther from the truth, (than that the Party took a forthright stand in favor of a new people's party directed against the two-party system at any time) until Wallace had settled the argument for the Party by announcing his independent candidacy on December 30, 1947. Nor did the Party make any effort to assume a vanguard role in the emerging coalition. On the contrary it deliberately shunned the initiative which it now seeks for the record to credit itself.

"Yes, a new party of course, but the most important thing is to defeat the Republicans in 1948", the Party double-talked. "We need a new party, but the masses aren't ready yet, so we can't isolate ourselves by taking the lead; anyhow it's too late for 1948; perhaps in 1952." But let the Party leaders speak for themselves:

Max Gordon (DW, 16 November 1946) scolds the voters who failed to vote because they saw so little difference between Truman and the Republicans. And earlier (20 September 1946) he labeled the claim that there is no difference between a Truman and a Vandenberg "a dangerous tendency". The Worker urged editorially (8 January 1948) political unity of labor (with the Democrats) and denounced "professional red-baiters, Trotskyites, and phony Socialists (who) are whooping it up for a 'third party' right now in order to discredit the idea by premature actions". The bitterest denunciation that the Party could bring against the PR Club when it was expelled in November 1946 was that it had made "one-sided attacks on the Democratic Party."

More than a year after the end of the war Dennis wrote (PA Sept. 1946) "The Republican Party is and remains the main party of reaction and monopoly capital, (and) the Truman administration is still sensitive to certain mass pressures." This after Truman had smashed the railroad strike. And in February 1947 (PA, p.118) Foster declared: "To defeat Republican reaction must be the major objective of the 1948 campaign. All other considerations should yield to this supreme necessity". Including obviously the building of an independent new party. As late as August 1947 (PA, p. 675) Foster referred to the Republican Party as "the main party of imperialist finance capital" as his contribution to clarity on the need for a new party.

But if the Party vacillated as to whether or not it was for an independent new party, it never vacillated on the tailist role which it proposed to play in such a party if and when it appeared. Bittleman was the chief "theoretical" exponent of this tailism. He branded (DW 17 February 1947) as "leftist opportunism"(sic) the assumption that the People's Coalition should "from the very outset be led and dominated by the most advanced sections of labor and the Communists." To do so he insists would involve (just why he doesn't say), a direct fight for a socialist society for which the American people are not ready. Therefore, he concludes, the hegemony of the movement must be relinquished to less advanced and more vacillating elements.

This is in direct contradiction to the specific directives on the People's Coalition which Dimitroff gave American Communists at the Seventh CI Congress. "We should develop", said Dimitroff, "the most widespread movement for the creation of such a Party, and take a lead in it. In no case must the initiative of organizing the party be allowed to pass to elements desirous of utilizing the discontent of the masses which have become disillusioned in both the bourgeois parties, Democratic and Republican, in order to create a 'third party' in the United States as an anti-Communist party, a party directed against the revolutionary movement."

At the 1945 Convention Comrade Dennis ascribed the gross opportunist errors of the Browder period to the fact that: "We have not yet established genuine democracy and collective work. We have confused the forging of firm, unbreakable Communist unity with the creation of syntaetic unity, which curtailed criticism and self-criticism." (The Worker, 1 July, 1945) His proposal to correct these grave faults, which was adopted by the Convention, was: "It is essential to institute everywhere full inner-Party democracy, based upon the principle of democratic centralism. It is necessary to put an end to that practice where new major policies are suddenly and without consultation thrust upon our membership".

And yet three years later, and with this same Dennis General Secretary of the Party, criticism (as opposed to adulation) can be exercised by other than members of the National Board, only at the risk of expulsion. Democratic centralism is non-existent, and new and major policies continue to be thrust upon the membership without consultation.

Yet in the 11,000 words of the Draft Resolution there is no mention of these unfulfilled promises, or indeed of democratic centralism. This despite the fact that as recently as the February 1948 Plenum, Dennis confessed that lack of adequate self-criticism was a main cause of the serious opportunist errors the Party has made since 1945. The Draft Resolution fails also to mention the Party's support of the CIO "no interference" resolution, or its decision not to affiliate with the C.I.B. for fear of reprisals by the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, as if to compensate for these omissions, it boldly proclaims that: "We do not shrink from the hammer blows of reaction."

In the course of a recent Brooklyn expulsion meeting, the expelled was informed that "proper criticism", contrary to that of which he had been guilty, "consists of awaiting the publication of the Draft Resolution and basing criticisms on its formulations". The Worker of May 22 warned us further that: "the solution of internal problems" such as inner-Party democracy, etc. should not occupy too much of our critical attention. It appears reasonable to conclude therefore that the omission of mention in the DR of controversial subjects with regard to which the leadership might well find it difficult to defend itself, is part of a carefully conceived plan to police the pre-convention discussions, and to avoid embarrassment or worse for the leaders. Together with Dennis' blunt threat (D7 11 February 1948) against "irresponsible elements (who) exploit our errors for factional purposes", characterizations which can be made to apply to any member who speaks out forthrightly against opportunism (and have already been so applied), it appears to us as it must to many Party members, as intimidation of the most brazen sort.

This then is the context in which the DR should be read and evaluated. If the solemn promises of the 1945 Resolution on so important a Party question as Democratic Centralism could be completely lost without trace, what confidence can there be that the perspectives and program of the present resolution will not prove equally illusory, once the leadership has been safely reelected and the Convention adjourned? As Stalin has stated it: "Who beside archive rats, does

not understand that a Party and its leaders must be tested first of all by their deeds and not by their declarations?"

In conclusion we want to address a few words of encouragement and solidarity to Comrades in CPUSA who are determined to rid the Party of its opportunist baggage and turn it to a truly Marxist-Leninist course. First of all you must not be deterred from the broadest and sharpest criticism of the Party's actions, of the consistent and purposeful gap between correct paper policies and their application, of the Party's failure to give principled leadership in the trade unions. You must not permit efforts to use the Draft Resolution as a straight jacket to stifle justified criticism to succeed. You must cut through attempted legalisms to demand that discussions be based on inner-Party democracy, and that real Democratic Centralism, promised by the 1945 Convention, be established in fact.

Despite the desire of the National Committee to avoid discussion of "internal problems", they were unable entirely to conceal the skeleton of opportunism in their closet, or to lock the door securely against those who are determined to bring it out in the open and give it its long overdue burial. Thus the Draft Resolution speaks of "the crucial importance of developing loyalty to the CP, of strengthening discipline and mass activity based on a clear understanding of, and devotion to the Party's principles and policies." (Our emphasis) Again it demands that: "The fight against Browder revisionism and against right opportunism and leftist sectarianism must be continued and intensified." These chinks of daylight must be utilized to raise correct criticisms and demands for inner-Party democracy and for a forthright denunciation of opportunist policies and leaders.

Many specific questions and demands which concern the workers must be brought forward, such as:

Why didn't the Party call for mass actions in support of the French and Italian strikes?

Why hasn't the Party raised the slogan of refusing to load or sail munition ships for Greece, China and Indonesia?

Demand that CP members in the unions, guilty of personal corruption or other anti-worker actions be exposed and expelled.

Demand that Party members expelled for fighting opportunism be reinstated.

Raise the question as to whether the YCL should be reconstituted.

Demand that the Party affiliate with the Communist Information Bureau, and denounce the cowardly lick-spittles of the National Board, who dared to give fear of the bourgeoisie's anger as an excuse not to join.

Demand that Socialism be taken out of the moth balls of timid eventuality, and put back into our literature and our programs, not as an immediate goal, but as a constant perspective toward which all our strategy and tactics, all our agitation and struggles for more immediate gains are consciously directed.

Life will not wait upon a laggard CPUSA to acknowledge and correct its opportunist errors, and accept its responsibility as the Party of the aggressor nation. This discussion period must therefore be made a turning point in the American Communist movement. We believe it is the urgent responsibility of every Bolshevik Comrade to utilize this period for the most determined efforts to arouse the membership to repudiate the Party's revisionist role, and set it on the Marxist-Leninist road.

We urge this fight, Comrades of the CPUSA, despite the fact that we doubt that it can achieve its main objective, because we believe it is the only way you can prepare for the next stage in the fight against opportunism, namely a new alignment of our forces. The actions of the National Committee, - the tightening of bureaucratic controls, the intolerance of any real criticism, the continued expulsions of all who seriously disagree, - have convinced us that no pressures which the membership can generate can now succeed in bringing about the basic changes in direction and leadership, without which there can be no real CP. (Certain token concessions may be made to the workers' dissatisfaction; Al Lannon may mumble out of the left side of his mouth, or Williamson may give McKenzie and Smith a gentle tap on the Right arm, but it must be remembered that there can be no compromises with opportunism. There is either the ideology of Marx and Lenin or the bourgeois ideology of the social-democratic betrayers; there can be no other.)

We believe therefore that the only way to achieve a bona fide CP in America is for Comrades, in and out of CPUSA, who want such a Party, to achieve ideological agreement and then to proceed without further delay with the organizational tasks of building it outside the framework of the present CPUSA.

Why then do we urge you, Party Comrades, to conduct a determined struggle in the pre-Convention discussions, and up to and as far as possible in the National Convention? Precisely because many of you (and also certain expelled Comrades) still have illusions that the CPUSA is not hopeless, that the fight inside the Party can yet succeed. Very well, we sincerely hope that you can prove we are wrong. While we consider this extremely improbable, we would then look forward to rejoining you within a redeemed CPUSA.

The need for the bona fide Communist Party of which we speak is real and immediate if the workers' fight to defeat the plans of American imperialism for fascism and World War III is to succeed. But should your efforts fail, as we believe they must, to accomplish the hoped for changes; if the discussion period and conventions should result, despite some harmless breast beating, in a renewed and

indefinite "mandate" to the same opportunist leaders to commit the same opportunist errors only a little more discreetly, then you will have learned through your own experience that the CPUSA is not and cannot become such a bona fide Party. There can be no further illusions as to "inner-Party democracy" or "reforms".

We believe that the preconditions will then exist and that the will be ripe for a joint effort of Comrades both within and without the CPUSA to proceed with the ideological and organizational tasks necessary for the building of a new Communist Party, - a Party which will reject opportunism in fact, and will base itself upon the closest collaboration with the Communist Information Bureau.

* * * * *

TWO LETTERS TO FORE 'N AFT

Dear Comrades:

This article is motivated by a sincere desire to create conditions that will allow maritime workers to build a truly Revolutionary Marxist Leninist Party. A Party that stands openly and unequivocally for the OVERTHROW of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism by struggling today.

We submit this article to the Fore 'N Aft because it is the only publication which attempts to give a Marxist-Leninist guidance to the confused and bitter struggle in the NMU today.

Before we arrived in New York City, our position was clear and firm. The Social-Democratic, class-collaborationist, bureaucratic (and we use the adjectives deliberately) machine within the NMU must be destroyed.

After witnessing the last NMU membership meeting at Manhattan Center, we add another label to this fraudulent group of bureaucrats who are destroying the working class name of the CP. Shades of the struggles of the SUP. Never, even the most bitter and final days of the CP fraction in the SUP did we conduct ourselves so disgracefully and with such gangster tactics as was carried on by this farcical CP. We lost because our tactics and our line was incorrect (to this date there has yet to be an analysis by the California CP of our mistakes in that Union.

With about 2,000 workers at the meeting, the combined voting on the main issue, that of the Injunction, found only 850 workers expressing themselves. The rest refused to vote--their abstention told plenty. The hysterical screaming and stomping on chairs by this young generation of Browder-Dennis trained Party members aroused nothing but open contempt expressed by many veteran seamen sitting beside the writer. The Party's machine polled 326 votes for Ferdinand Smith for chairman (he was beaten by the chairman of the Rank and File Caucus by a vote of two to one). That was their highest vote of the evening.

Yes - the workers are repudiating ten rotten years of class collaboration and mis-leadership. This is the last thing of course that this fraudulent CP will consider. They refuse to ask, why, after labeling Curran a "shipowner agent" - the workers are supporting this "shipowner agent". The answer is obvious to any honest revolutionist. Their choice should be obvious to any who have the slightest conception of the class struggle.

Our criticism and analysis of the Rank and File Caucus as observed 3,000 miles away has proven correct, upon a first hand contact with the forces that make up this movement. We refused to join it months ago, because we said it had adopted an anti-working class slogan. That its ideology essentially was not only anti-Party machine but also anti-working class. We said that the leadership of the Caucus and the CP were both afraid of any militant action.

But above/we were concerned with the slogan "No cliques, groupings or factions or parties". TO SUPPORT THIS SLOGAN IS TO REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE MUST BE FREE DEMOCRATIC CONDITIONS WHICH WILL ALLOW THE MEMBERSHIP TO BUILD THEIR OWN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY.

Our estimate of the Caucus was correct. We still refuse to give a blank check endorsement to it (as the Party did with Roosevelt for 12 years). We say those Marxists who are supporting this Caucus must and should have the position of Principled Support.* We believe in the interest of developing a revolutionary movement in the NMU, they should have, and must let the workers know they are the real Communists. They must not only blast the Party for what it is but they must in the same breath explain that there has to be a working class party that will fight for Socialism and against Capitalism within the Union. They should have and must tell the workers how a real Party would have worked and will work in the Union. The election is just about over. There is no doubt that the Caucus will win. WE THINK NOW IS THE TIME BEFORE THE RESULTS ARE KNOWN FOR ALL SINCERE MARXISTS WITHIN THE CAUCUS TO MAKE THEIR POSITION CLEAR.

Butch Saunders
National Maritime Union
#32026

P.S. True Communists have nothing to hide.
*Fore 'N Aft cannot support the Caucus under any conditions. Fore 'N Aft however does think that there are good -- if temporarily confused men in the Caucus.

* * * * *

Dear Comrades:

Due to shipping steadily and address difficulties, I have just received the 4th issue of Fore 'N Aft. I agree with the criticism of the Party and analysis of the role the Party has played in the NMU. Namely, a betrayal of its own principles and members by lipservice opposition to the Marshall Plan, the Taft-Hartley Law etc., etc.

Fore 'N Aft correctly exposes the Caucus as a reactionary red-

baiting group representing the Marshall Plan and the war plans of American reaction, opposition to the Third Party, sell-out in the fight against the Taft-Hartley Law and the sabotaging of the fight against the deportation of Ferdinand Smith.

Fore 'N Aft correctly tells the workers not to support the Caucus, but by calling for a policy of vote neither slate, Fore 'N Aft takes a negative position. It leaves the rank and file of the Union membership without means of expressing their opposition to the red-baiting of the pro-imperialist and sellout policies of the Caucus. The criteria by which Fore 'N Aft calls upon the membership to judge who should be the officials or whom to vote for are good, but in the absence of an independent slate remain an abstraction with no possible room for action.

I believe that the position of Fore 'N Aft should have been to support the Party slate for the one important purpose of registering the membership's repudiation of the policies of the Caucus. This support could in no way be unconditional. This support should have been accompanied by exposure of the Party's lipservice to a progressive program. Fore 'N Aft should have called for action by the membership to put Party leaders on the spot to force them to carry out their program. Secondly, this support should have been accompanied by a choice of individuals on both slates who came closest to filling the requirements put forth by Fore 'N Aft. This followed by a call to the membership to take action to push these people to the assumption of a more correct position. The election of such people would help the fight to get rid of both unprincipled machines after the elections. I repeat that even if the strength of Fore 'N Aft was insufficient to appreciably influence the results of the election, a correct principled position is nevertheless of the utmost importance. This position should have been calling upon the membership to repudiate Curran's reactionary program to support a progressive anti-imperialist program. The only way this could have been done under the circumstances existing in the NMU was to support the Party slate while at the same time carrying out rank and file action to force the Party to cease its lip-service at the same time its sabotage of a progressive program. Such a position would have initiated and prepared the way for a principled struggle to drive out of the NMU both the opportunist mis-leaders of the Communist Party waterfront machine and the reactionary mis-leaders of the Caucus.

Comradely yours,

A Maritime Worker

* * * *

Fore 'N Aft's Answer
(to the above letter)

Writing regarding our election issue (#4), the Comrade correspondent (hereafter Comrade C) makes it clear that he agrees with our analysis but not with our conclusions. This limits the territory we have to cover in our answer and allows us to concentrate on the problem underlying this discussion: the independent role of a small group of

Communists in a situation in which two "major" machines are incorrect. "Both sides wrong" is a situation which confronts American Communists a great part of the time. Too often, they are flabbergasted by this predicament and desperately attempt to find justification for one of the two incorrect sides. We think that the logic in the very ideas Comrade C stresses leads to our position and away from his.

Four main points are made in Comrade C's letter. 1-He agrees with Fore 'N Aft's analysis and criticism of both machines--the CP and the Caucus. 2-He suggests and analyzes the error in F & A's conclusions. 3 and 4-He, unwittingly, presents two separate conclusions which contradict and cancel out one another, and which lead-logically-back to F & A's position.

1- "I agree with the criticism of the Party and analysis of the role the Party has played in the NMU" etc. "Fore 'N Aft Correctly exposes the Caucus as reactionary redbaiting group..."etc.

Obviously, Comrade C and F & A agree on both machines.

2- Comrade C characterizes F & A's "vote neither slate" as a "negative position". We think that for Communists a negative position is basically one of destructive criticism, incomplete criticism, no position policy (or neutral position), or--certainly--an incorrect position generally. But, definitely, there is nothing negative in Communist advice to vote for neither of two wrong slates or machines. In fact, Communists sometimes find it necessary to advise workers to boycott certain elections. We think it would certainly be a negative position in the NMU today to ask seamen to vote for a machine which is guilty of "a betrayal of its own principles and members" in order "to repudiate Curran's reactionary program". We--"positively"--cannot see how we are going to repudiate Curran's program by endorsing a machine which betrays the seamen to Curran's program. That would be negative.

The Comrade writes that this negative position "leaves the rank and file of the union membership without means of expressing their opposition to...the Caucus". We feel that opposition can be expressed by workers in many ways other than by voting for machines which do not represent them. This is often the case because we live under a system in which, all too often, workers cannot--have not the means to--express themselves through major candidates or machines. Sometimes, Communists have to advise workers to write in candidates, boycott elections, or campaign only on issues and positions without candidates. (Of course, as soon as possible, Communists try to run candidates.) Also, because of varying reasons, Communists sometimes have to run independently without constituting themselves another small slate. The responsibility that Communists must have in any situation is to give the workers a definite, non-double-talk program in order to educate them beyond the limited horizon of one election. In the NMU elections, F & A did offer a clear-cut program--as the writer admits. It did offer--as the writer admits--good criteria for judging candidates. The elections are not the most important factor in the NMU today. More important is the development of an independent Communist policy and a principled Communist corps.

Comrade C maintains that "in the absence of an independent slate" our criteria "remain an abstraction with no possible room for action". This, in Communist ideology, is untrue because candidates and slates are not limitations or prerequisites for action. Such an idea betrays a reliance on parliamentarism which is not Marxist-Leninist. It would be closer to the truth to say that, too often, workers vote for mis-representatives with a sense of "abstraction" (such as: "you have to vote for someone") which ignores action as the important factor. We think Comrade C would agree with us on this.

Aside from all this, F & A did ask the seamen to vote for the best candidates according to its checklist because it believed that there were good men running--but not defined by slates. Also, for the reason that we thought there were good men (if confused) in both machines who would turn out OK, we considered the most important educational factor to be voting on a program independently of either slate. The day will soon come when the best NMUers will ditch both machines and become a real leadership. We also made it clear that any independent candidate in the NMU who measured up to standards should be voted for. F & A did not list names because both machines had hired "Diogenes and his candle to track down the honest men" in F & A and working with it. For security reasons we did not name a F & A slate. We, ourselves, feel that this is not the most effective way to work, and we intend to remedy this as soon as we can. Perhaps C insists on the names. But C, himself, did not list names. Perhaps his reasons are as understandable and responsible as ours. It is exactly with the help of such Comrades as C that we can progress past our temporary inability to work completely openly and remedy this shortcoming. We feel that our general anonymity is not an error; it is an unfortunate inconvenience at the moment. There is no reason for allowing this temporary convenience to prevent us from projecting the correct analysis and program for judging candidates.

3-Comrade C's first slate. C says support the CP slate conditionally to repudiate the Caucus. The conditions are "exposure of the Party's lipservice" and pressure on the CP candidates to enforce the lipserved program. We think that an exposure of the CP proves the betrayal of its principles and members to the Caucus. If this is true, how can we repudiate the Caucus via a betrayal by the CP to the Caucus? Even as an "abstraction" it doesn't make sense. Exposure of the CP machine proves to us that the CP machine does not and will not respond to pressure and the desires of the membership--except to step up the betrayal with doubletalk twice confounded. We are sure that Comrade C knows that the CP does not countenance pressure on it in a very principled way. In other words, C's conditions merely destroy the logical possibility of supporting the CP slate. His next condition leads in actuality to no slate and a new tactic:

4-"Secondly, this support should have been accompanied by a choice of individuals on both slates who came closest to filling the requirements put forth by Fore 'N Aft" plus pressure on these. This choice from both slates negates the support for the one slate: C implies that only part of the CP slate should be supported: he implies that only part of the Caucus slate should be supported. Comrade C is thus back to F & A's position in the election: find the best candidates wherever

they are. In fact, Comrade C correctly states that such a careful choice regardless of slates would tend to destroy both machines after the elections. Why is it that while understanding the CP betrayal C still gravitates towards the CP slate? Could it be--and understandably enough--that confronted with the mess in the NMU, C instinctively turns to the good name Communist on a bad slate? If understandable, this is incorrect merely for the reason that "all Communism in this CP machine is purely fictitious; any resemblance to actual Communism is purely coincidental and unintentional."

Anyway, we agree on the important point with Comrade C. We need "a principled struggle to drive out of the NMU both the opportunist misleaders of the CP waterfront machine and the reactionary misleaders of the Caucus". We also agree that "even if the strength of Fore 'N Aft was insufficient to appreciably influence the results of the election, a correct principled position is nevertheless of the utmost importance." This is the position F & A took and will continue to take.

We appreciate the sincere and serious way in which Comrade C offered us his criticism. We feel that it was offered as constructive criticism to help F & A. And all such criticism does, despite any disagreements, help us reevaluate our position continually as demanded by the complicated situation in the NMU. We hope that Comrade C will see in our answer an equal sincerity, and we hope he feels with us that our agreement on the analysis of both machines and our common intentions to rebuild the NMU to its former position of militant union leadership in the U.S. is much more far-reaching than our current disagreement.

Following is a partial list of some of the literature Fore 'N Aft has distributed without cost to its readers:

1. Stalin's Speeches on the American Communist Party (Reprint of of a pamphlet published by the Central Comm., CPUSA 1929)
2. How the American Communist Party Carries Out Self-Criticism and Controls Fulfillment of Decisions - by J. Tsurul (Reprint of an article published in Vol. IX - #15 of the C. I. 1932)
3. Open Letter From the Comintern to Sixth Convention of the CPUSA (Reprinted from "On the Road to Bolshevization" 1929 - published by Executive Committee Communist International)
4. Present Situation and Our Task (Report of Chairman Mao Tze-Tung to the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party on December 25, 1947)
5. Excerpts from a Soviet Review of James Allen's book (Printed in #20 October 1947 of Bolshevik, theoretical organ of C.P.S.U.)
6. The Crisis in the CPUSA by Harrison George (Printed December '47)
7. Open Letter to the Membership CPUSA by Francis Franklin

Fore 'N Aft has also circulated the literature of other correct expelled groups. Finances have not been an easy problem although to date F & A have been reluctant to solicit its readers. For the continued distribution of such material (Cominform Organ, New Times, etc.) your contributions are needed.