

OUR PARTY AND LEADERSHIP

By Alexander Bittelman

(Fifth Article)

THE BUILDING UP OF THE Communist Party as a broad, mass vanguard party of the American working class is the all-important task of the American Communists. This is not a narrow partisan task. For only such a mass Communist Party, recognized as the advanced party of the working class, can and will promote and establish labor's leadership in all the progressive movements of the people; and only labor's leadership will insure the final and complete victory of the people against reaction, fascism and imperialist war.

Why is labor's influence and leadership so much more advanced and powerful in many European countries than in the United States? For two main reasons. There labor has had a long tradition of political independence which has given the workers their political influence and strength.

There, too, have arisen strong and influential Communist parties, recognized by the masses as their vanguard and leader, thus capable of leading the working class to ever greater influence in the affairs of their nations. This is the main secret of the developing new democracies in Europe. This is also the answer to all the major problems facing the American working class.

Comparing the American with the European situation, Comrade Dennis made the following concluding observation in his political report to the December meeting of the National Committee:

"Thus, we have a situation in which as yet labor has forged neither a mass united front party of its own, nor a wide, people's democratic-coalition party in which it could assume leadership."

And this is closely bound up with the fact that:

"Unlike the situation in many European countries, our Party has not yet succeeded in attaining the strength and influence of a really broad, mass party" (Eugene Dennis, *The People Against the Trusts*, pages 6 and 7, New Century Publishers).

It all comes down to this, from the Marxist standpoint: to build the people's anti-monopoly coalition into a power strong enough to win, we must promote labor's leadership in it; and to promote labor's leadership in the people's coalition, we must build the Communist Party as the mass van-

guard party of the American working class.

THIS DEMANDS A CONSISTENT struggle for labor unity without which labor cannot attain a leading position in the people's coalition. This demands also a consistent struggle for the working collaboration and unity of all left-center forces in the trade unions without which the struggle for labor unity will be crippled.

This demands finally the consistent struggle for the united anti-fascist front of all progressive currents in the labor movement as the major road of struggle for labor unity. Thus and only thus must we fight for the upbuilding of the Communist Party as the mass vanguard party of the American working class.

Both Right and Leftist opportunism attack the Party's line on this question as on all others. And it is here, more than anywhere else, that opportunist deviations from the Party's line are particularly dangerous and costly. This is so for the reason that a correct conception of the role of the Communist Party and how to fulfill this role in particular situations is fundamental to all Communist policies.

Right opportunism's cardinal sin is an underestimation of the vanguard role of the Communist Party. Browder revisionism developed this underestimation to its very end—to the liquidation of the Communist Party. And an attitude of underestimating the leading role of the Party means in practice failure to build the Party altogether. For the Communist Party can be built as a mass party of influence only if it is built as a leading party, a vanguard party of the working class. It cannot be built in any other way. Our own American experiences prove that conclusively.

While there are many objective historic reasons for the slow growth of labor's political independence in the United States, the chief subjective reason in modern times—up until 1919—is the absence of a true Marxist Party of labor fighting to become the vanguard of its class.

And what was it that militated against the earlier rise of such a

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false assumptions and very dangerous to labor and the people.

LEFTIST OPPORTUNISM achieves the same final results as Right opportunism, only from a different end. It is from this end, the "left" end, that the renegades of the New Committee for Publications (NCP) together with Darcy and Dunne, are operating at present, in general accord with the Trotskyite fake and provocative line for an "immediate" socialist revolution in the United States.

The cardinal sin of Leftist opportunism and sectarianism on the question of the Party is that it talks about building the Party as something different and separate from both the leading role of the Party in the progressive movements and struggles of the working class, and the leading role of the working class in the progressive movements of the people. Or, to put it another way, leftist opportunism and sectarianism talks about building the party in separation from the struggle for labor unity and for the people's anti-monopoly coalition.

What is the result? Not the building of the Party but the tendency to isolate the Communists from the workers and the workers from the other democratic forces of the American people.

Because: at any given period in the development of the labor movement of modern times, the vanguard party of the working class can be built only in the process of struggle for the leading role of labor in the progressive and democratic movements of the people. And in this present period in the United States, this means building the Party in the process of struggle for the anti-monopoly people's coalition and for labor's leading role in it.

By militating against the Party's line for the building of labor's leadership in the coalition, Leftist opportunism the same as Right opportunism is militating against the building of a mass vanguard Communist Party.

How do we build the Party? Here is how Comrade Dennis puts it:

"Our Communist Party must consciously and constantly strive to become a mass party of mass action. We must develop our political and organizing initiative, our pioneering role, our leadership in the struggles of the working

people" (Ibid, page 61).

Further:

"Our Party must assert and establish its independent role as the Marxist vanguard of the working class. The face of the Party, the position of the Party, must stand out at all times." (Ibid.)

This requires that:

"We must expand and consolidate our ties with organized labor and with all anti-fascists and progressive movements and organizations. We must participate in every progressive, united and democratic front struggle and movement, irrespective of sponsorship." (Ibid.)

This is how we build the Party in the present period. This is the way our Party's leadership sees the task—the task which Comrade Foster has projected so powerfully and convincingly time and again; the task which Comrade Dennis has concretized in his report in all its crucial aspects.

AS AGAINST THE tendencies to Right opportunism, we must emphasize the point that what is required of the Communists is "greater initiative and boldness"; that we must give "not only the basic, long-range answers, but also a practical solution for each tactical situation and immediate problem confronting the people" (Ibid, page 61).

And as against the tendencies to Leftist opportunism, we must stress particularly the following:

"We must understand that our independent role consists not only in what we do or say alone, by ourselves, independent of all other forces. It also depends upon how we Communists come forward as Communists, and become recognized as the most loyal and capable trade unionists, as the staunchest fighters in all people's organizations, carrying out better than anyone else the common tasks assumed by non-Communists and Communists alike" (Ibid., pages 51-52.)

It is no accident that the renegades of all stripes (NCP, Darcy, Dunne, etc.) are slandering with such reckless abandon the leadership of our Party, especially Comrades Dennis and Foster. And, funniest of all, is the ridiculous attempt of some of these renegades to parade as the "original" fighters against Browder revisionism.

For Marxists understand very well that Leftist opportunism (Dunne) is no cure for Right opportunism (Browder revisionism),

both leading to the same end; and that people who with equal ease can stimulate Leftist opportunism in the labor movement while glorifying the reformist traditions of the Second International (Darcy) are no fighters, whether original or otherwise, of Right opportunism and revisionism.

OF COURSE, WE ARE NOT hero-worshippers. But as Marxists we know the very great and sometimes decisive role played by true working class and Communist leadership in the progressive struggles of the masses. When, therefore, we see the desperate efforts of the renegades to undermine the prestige of our leaders, we understand its meaning. It is to undermine our Party. It is to obstruct its consolidation and weaken its unity.

It is, in other words, an effort to hamper the building of our Party into the mass vanguard party of the American working class. This, in the final analysis, is giving aid and comfort to the offensive of imperialist reaction.

Conscious of the basic importance of building our Party and its leadership, we must systematically promote the Party's leading role in the progressive movements of the people and its working class. But to do this effectively—

"We must, for one thing, overcome all Right opportunist tendencies to tail after, or uncritically support, other labor and progressive leaders, as well as the spokesmen of the bourgeois liberals. Likewise we must put an end to all Leftist moods, inclinations and tendencies to 'go it alone,' to belittle or reject entering into progressive, united and democratic front agreements, no matter how limited in scope or temporary they may be" (Ibid, page 61).

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